

LILY

Books by Vincent Sheean

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT
A CERTAIN RICH MAN
THIS HOUSE AGAINST THIS HOUSE
BETWEEN THE THUNDER AND THE SUN
BIRD OF THE WILDERNESS
NOT PEACE BUT A SWORD
A DAY OF BATTLE
THE PIECES OF A FAN
SAN FELICE
PERSONAL HISTORY
THE TIDE
GOG AND MAGOG
AMERICAN AMONG THE RIFFI
ANATOMY OF VIRTUE
NEW PERSIA
THE INDIGO BUNTING
RAGE OF THE SOUL

Lily Soames, once widowed, once divorced, endowed by her widowhood with wealth and possessed of both beauty and brains, achieved her position in international society without ever experiencing the full delights or the inseparable miseries of a passionate love. Her belated awakening in maturity involved her in a fateful combination of events which were uncomfortably beyond her control. For the first time in her life she lost command of herself in the grip of an obsession and became helpless to direct an affair which, quite clearly, could have no happy outcome.

Ricardo, who cast his spell over Lily, was a Spanish revolutionary with all the civilized charm and expensive education befitting a son of an aristocratic Castilian family. He was, in addition, a fierce and courageous man, a man born to be burned at the stake for his beliefs, a man who spent his life in dangerous conspiracy. His life was, nevertheless, ultimately controlled by the Church against which he had rebelled; destined for the priesthood, he had taken his preliminary vows before the tide of Republicanism had caught him in its grip, and, whatever his political activities, he could not deny the religious sanctions which lay deep in his conscience.

This is the story of the love of Lily and Ricardo.

LILY

VINCENT SHEEAN



CASSELL & CO. LTD.

LONDON

CASELL & CO. LTD.

37/38 St. Andrews Hill

Queen Victoria Street

London E.C.4

and at

31-34 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh

210 Queen Street, Melbourne

26-30 Clarence Street, Sydney

C.P.O. 3031, Auckland, N.Z.

1068 Broadview Avenue, Toronto 6

P.O. Box 275, Cape Town

P.O. Box 1386, Salisbury, S. Rhodesia

Munsoor Building, Main Street, Colombo 11

Haroon Chambers, South Napier Road, Karachi

13-14 Ajmeri Gate Extension, New Delhi

15 Graham Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay 1

17 Central Avenue, P.O. Dharamtala, Calcutta

122 East 55th Street, New York 22

Avenida 9 de Julho 1138, São Paulo

Galeria Güemes, Escritorio 518-520 Florida 165, Buenos Aires

P.O. Box 959, Accra, Gold Coast

25 rue Henri Barbusse, Paris 5e

Islands Brygge 5, Copenhagen

CHAPTER ONE

BETWEEN SLEEPING and waking, and at no other time, Lily Soames was invaded by her own memory. She was a woman who liked to live in the present and succeeded in doing so almost always. Her present was in every important respect a different quantity from her past, but even if it had not been so—even if past and present had flowed together indistinguishably—Lily would still have wished the present moment to dominate, in fact to dictate, every thought and act.

Yet in that strange twilight between sleeping and waking, when the consciousness escapes control but does not lose itself, sound and smell and other perceptions not so easy to name were in charge of the evocation of forgotten things. A certain grinding or pumping noise, faint, distant, arising out of the plumbing arrangements of the hotel, brought into being the rush and clang and perilous lurch of the Sixth Avenue Elevated, so that Lily, in that state, could actually see and hear it as if she were gazing at it from below and sometimes as if she were a passenger upon it.

The Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway was in New York, and this was Cannes. Moreover, the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway had been demolished years before. It came to life, the most vivid and thrusting life, on most of Lily's mornings in Cannes. She did not know why. She supposed it was because the Sixth Avenue Elevated had

made some peculiarly deep impression upon her, by its sheer monstrosity, when she first arrived in New York from Texas over twenty years ago, as a young woman no doubt happier, but far less accomplished and experienced, than she was to-day. She had hardly ever been a passenger on the contraption (once or twice, perhaps) because Steve, her first husband, thought all forms of public transport beneath the standards of his own success. It had impressed itself upon her just the same and came back now because of that unidentified small noise in the distance which remotely (so very remotely) resembled it.

Another noise which reached deep into the past and plucked out a forgotten sensation was one certain swirling swoosh of water. It might have been merely the flushing of a toilet upstairs or next door. Whatever it was, in that state between sleeping and waking, it brought back the kitchen of Lily's mother's boarding house in Albuquerque, and along with it the monotonous and interminable dishwashing that followed every meal. She could feel the water and soap on her hands and hear the water swirling around the dishes in the sink. Her mother's voice, nasal and urgent: 'Lily! Lily! I declare! Ain't you *never* going to finish them dishes?' The dislike of dishwashing was perhaps stronger than any other sensation retained from her years of bondage; perhaps that was why it came back under the stimulus of a dimly similar water noise; she tried to think it out and could find no other cause. Certainly no noises here in the hotel in Cannes brought back to her the other parts of her work at home, such as waiting on the table, for example, which she had actually enjoyed. The comments of the boarders, the give-and-take of a somewhat uninhibited time and place, had been relatively pleasant, even though waiting on tables was hard work in itself. But that did not come back—only the boredom and discontent of washing the dishes.

And such things had, of course, nothing whatever to do with Lily's life nowadays. She had not washed a dish in years. Her beauty of face and form were maintained with every purchasable skill and with an inner resolution which was quite ruthless. Her clothes were perfect, her surroundings exquisite, her grammar both in French and in English so good as to have become simple nature. And yet in these half-awakened states she could actually see and hear the raw girl that she had been, calling back: 'Aw, cripes, Ma, can't you just leave me be?'

Then there was a certain entanglement of sheets, or of sheets and blankets, which twisted Lily's legs in such a way as to resurrect for her the long, hard body of Steve, physically and ardently present. He had been dead for twelve years but she could feel his body when she got into that particular entanglement with the bedclothes. It was not something she did. It was something that happened to her in her sleep. It did not happen as often as the Sixth Avenue Elevated or the dishwashing. It was already going on when she reached the half-sleeping and half-waking state, and she would moan and reach out. Afterwards, smoking a cigarette over her coffee, she would reflect and say to herself: Yes, I suppose I must really have loved Steve. I must have. Why else does he haunt me? But at the time I thought he was—well, what all young girls who want to escape from home think: a meal ticket. A rudimentary form of security. I never knew he would strike oil in Texas. Neither did he. It was a letch, perhaps. And yet it must also have been love, somehow or other, or he wouldn't come back to me with that extreme reality. Steve's been dead twelve years. He wore funny clothes and terrible neckties and diamond stickpins and all the other things I have learned to shudder at—and which, in fact, I never did like although I didn't know why—but he was good and he loved me. I had to fight

like a tigress to keep his money when that first wife of his tried to horn in, with her litter of children and her pile of letters. Still, it was worth it. I've never been dependent on any man since.

That was Lily's test of achievement in the life of woman—not to be dependent on any man. She held in equal horror those situations, common in the experience of her current acquaintance, in which a woman either lived upon the livelihood of husband or lover, or conversely supplied livelihood to one or the other or both. Of the two, the first might (and properly) be tolerated as a stage of transition toward independence, but if it became a permanent condition it was to be deplored. In her way, and not at all unconsciously—for she was fluent and explicit on this as on other subjects—Lily was a feminist. She would never have bothered about the vote, either to obtain it or to use it, but she firmly upheld the rights of women in such matters as men's money.

On this particular morning in September she had had a prolonged siege of those sense-impressions, drawn by some mechanical plunger out of the depths of memory, which she did not at all enjoy. Sometimes the half-asleep and half-awake period lasted an hour. Sometimes it lasted a good deal longer. This morning it had lasted about two hours. It had nothing whatever to do with dreams. Lily's dreams were for the most part pleasurable and bore no clear relation to her life, past or present. These vivid impressions of scenes long gone were not dreams at all: they were real, just as real as any experience of the waking day. And on this morning the memory of Steve, sharp and strong as it was, had been merged, mixed with, at times almost obscured by, a recent but somehow kindred memory, as if the man dead twelve years and the man known for forty-eight hours had been (in defiance of all sense) the same.

She got up and put a blue-silk dressing gown on over her wispy white nightdress. From her bedroom, with the shutters closed and the heavy curtains pulled together, it was impossible to see the complexion of the day. She went into the big sitting room and looked out of the long French windows over the balcony. Her rooms were at the corner of the hotel, looking down on the beach.

The day was fair, there was a little breeze, and the white-sailed boats were scudding along over a brilliant sea. It would be hot later on and she would bathe. She opened the windows on the balcony and stood there, breathing with satisfaction at the condition of being wide awake. How tiresome it was for Steve to afflict her morning twilights! And, above all, to be mixed in this mysterious manner with the hard reality of the recent truth!

She went back to her bedroom and rang the bell. There was a brush on her night table, and she was calmly brushing her sleek, gold-brown hair when Françoise, her maid, came in with mail, papers and a cup of coffee. Françoise drew the curtains and threw the shutters wide.

Françoise was impersonal to the point of being abstract, a sort of composition in function. She did everything right and took no interest in it, as if a machine called 'lady's-maid' had taken over and regulated her precise performance. She was a Belgian woman, highly recommended, and had come to Lily eight months before from the impeccable agency in Paris which arranged such things for visiting Americans who were rich enough to afford it. There might have been thought and even emotion behind Françoise' spare, sharp exterior, but no suggestion of the kind was allowed to transpire. Lily sometimes speculated that it would be pleasant to find a cause for being annoyed with Françoise, but no such cause ever presented itself, and to display irritation without cause

was against Lily's code. It brought on wrinkles at the corners of the eyes, she had been told and believed, besides being bad for one's glandular balance. Consequently she eyed the machine-like operation of Françoise' morning duties as benevolently as if a benevolent intention had occasioned them and a genuine gratitude were to be their reward.

'No eggs,' she said. 'A big orange juice, please, and some toast and some fruit. And a big pot of coffee.'

There was scarcely any variation in this matter but it had to be said each time because Lily had a dread of routine and wanted to maintain her whimsicality in small concerns. It was a kind of freedom, and upon freedom Lily was, and always had been, fanatical. 'Aw, cripes, Ma, can't you just leave me be?'

Françoise disappeared and Lily turned to her mail. It was of no interest—some bills, some invitations—until the very last letter, from the Ritz in Paris, which said that her second husband, Mr. Henry McK. Soames, was arriving in Cannes on the following day and wished to see her to discuss their mutual interests.

'Jee-zuss!' said Lily aloud, and sat up straighter on her white silk cushions.

She had not seen Henry for two years, since their divorce, in fact, and had no desire to see him. It was not that he irked her in any way, not that her bosom ached for his embrace or that her gorge rose against it; not that she disliked his company or liked it either very much; it was only that she had regarded Henry as a finished item. She had been married to Henry for eight years, which she considered an adequate term of office for any woman. He had given her a very high degree of social consideration and esteem. She had never needed his money; she had Steve's money. What did he mean by 'mutual interests', anyhow? Something to do with his loathsome

children, no doubt, that purse-proud, stiff-necked son and that lanky-haired highbrow daughter. These two had contrived, although in fundamental opposition to each other as brother and sister, to present a singularly united front against Lily, and had in the result done more to crumble her equanimity than any other force she had yet encountered. No doubt Henry now wished to whittle down her alimony so as to give more to his despicable children—something of that sort, no doubt—and she resolved at once to have nothing to do with the transaction. She did not need Henry's money; she had Steve's money; but a woman owed something to her own self-respect, and it was against nature for anybody to live eight years with Mr. Henry McK. Soames and not derive in the sequel a decent recompense.

The coffee, orange juice and toast arrived.

'Has anybody telephoned?' Lily asked.

'Non, madame.'

Well, it was early. She looked at her watch and saw that it was now ten o'clock. Certainly nobody in Europe would telephone a lady before ten o'clock. At half-past ten she had her masseuse coming: a Swedish woman with iron hands and an incomprehensible dialect which did not hamper, but rather encouraged, her zeal for expression. The woman talked so much and in such an abstruse manner that Lily usually went to sleep. She felt so much better afterwards that the flow of language could be disregarded and forgotten, as being the defect of a quality. However, on this particular day it might be best not to sleep, since in fact a modicum of thought had become almost imperative.

She put it off. She looked at the newspapers. She had two French newspapers from Paris and the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, which she read first. From that paper she learned that Mr. Henry McK. Soames had

arrived in the *Queen Elizabeth* and was staying at the Hotel Ritz. She also learned, and learned again from the French papers, that there was a cabinet crisis, that the government had resigned, that the budget had not been passed, that most of the needed legislation was in abeyance until the formation of a new government, and that the Americans (she never really knew what was meant by 'the Americans') feared a disastrous setback to the defence of the western world.

'*Par exemple*,' she said aloud, sipping her coffee. 'Françoise, I have the feeling that everything I read in the papers has been in the papers before.'

'*Oui, madame*,' said Françoise.

The golden morning streamed through the open windows and made the bedroom brighter than it really was, its splashy flowered carpet rising almost with a thrust to the vision. Lily looked at the carpet critically now; she had paid little attention to it before. It seemed to be Spanish.

'Françoise,' she asked, 'is that a Spanish carpet?'

'*Oui, madame*.'

There was something so definitive about Françoise's responses that it was not possible to question them. And yet Lily was not altogether sure whether this carpet was Spanish or a French imitation. She had some knowledge of such things, as of all things; in the years since she had washed dishes in Albuquerque she had not wasted her time; and such a carpet, she felt, if it were really Spanish, would have to be old, would have to be of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, whereas this carpet was almost as new as to-day's newspaper. Perhaps they made such new things even in Spain, new things after old, the copy copied and recopied, the endless gallery of mirrors.

And why do I think of Spain or of Spanish carpets?

She asked herself that question and smiled a secret

smile. Her whole body expanded and twisted under the sheets. She smiled at the flood of sun through the long windows.

'Take the tray away,' she said. 'I must get up. The masseuse is coming soon. Let her in. And then afterwards my bath, and that pale grey dress that I haven't worn yet, you know the one, with roses at the neck. There are shoes and gloves and a hat. You know.'

'*Oui, madame.*'

The masseuse was fierce and loquacious, as always, but on this occasion Lily neither slept nor listened. Her mind was now thoroughly awake and engaged in action on all fronts. As the iron fingers dug into her soft but firm flesh and the weird voice rasped on in incomprehensible French, Lily was considering the contingencies presented by Henry McK. Soames and his visit to Cannes. Why on earth did he have to come just at this time? It was demoniacal of him—the only demoniacal thing Lily had ever perceived in his conduct or character. It was as if he had known that this was mathematically the worst he could do. And yet he could not have known what he was doing. If he had disembarked from the *Queen Elizabeth* two days ago, he must have left New York several days before she had even met Ricardo.

Ricardo.

Ricardo.

She said those syllables over to herself in her mind. It might not even be his name. That had been suggested somehow, she could hardly remember how. Something he had said. Something Marjorie Wogan had said. 'It's as good a name as any,' Marjorie had remarked at some point. And then she had called him 'Ricky'. They had seemed old friends, and the 'Ricky' sounded more like a nickname than a name, rather as if he might have been called Ricardo in baptism and as a prefix to some other

and, Lily thought, highly elaborate family name. 'Mendoza y Pelayo de Montemayor,' she said to herself, and laughed. 'Medina Valeria y Cruz de la Frontera.' She had never known anybody who acknowledged such high Castilian vocables, but in her reading of the past twenty years, which had ranged over considerable territory, she had met the like more than once and relished the flavour.

'Mr. Ricardo' seemed a poor sort of name for a man whose romanticism was worn like a suit of armour, and not armour for a museum, either, but working armour for a field of battle. His hawkish face and gaunt body made, first of all, an impression of strength, and his nervous hands with the tendons outlined upon them looked strong, too. It was the romanticism of strength, not of weakness, and there could be little doubt that it had been perceived by many other ladies before Lily came along. She did not dwell upon that likelihood but she conceded it easily. His hair, very thick and black and worn at a length which made it almost shaggy, was pierced in three distinct places by shafts of snow-white. They seemed almost to have been arranged there, placed like arrows in a sheaf, one over the right temple, one over the left, and one from the middle of the forehead. His extraordinary appearance was, indeed, a source of embarrassment at first meeting, or at least Lily had found it so. She could not take her eyes away from him. There were, after all, two other persons at lunch, Marjorie Wogan and a famous French painter. The French painter, petulant with success, had never had so little attention paid to him in years. Both Marjorie Wogan and Lily Soames came alive when they spoke to Mr. Ricardo or when he spoke to them. Between times they looked at him. The French painter might as well have been part of the table decoration.

Marjorie Wogan was a sly puss. Imagine having a man

like Ricardo on tap and never bringing him out before! Lily had said as much, after lunch, when the two women retired to Marjorie's bedroom for a touch of powder.

'Where,' she demanded, 'did you get Mr. Ricardo? And why haven't we seen him before now? I must say it's selfish of you, dear.'

'He's a rare bird,' Marjorie said. 'I only ran into him by chance. He was down at the port, where I had gone walking to look at the boats and the sights. I seized upon him. Goodness, it's been five years since we met! I haven't been hiding him, I assure you. I had to browbeat him into coming to lunch. He didn't want to come.'

'Why not?'

'Oh, I don't know,' Marjorie said rather evasively, straightening pillows on her own sofa. 'Ricky's rare. I once knew him pretty well. He doesn't like parties. He never did.'

'This is no party,' said Lily reasonably. 'It's just lunch, isn't it?'

'It's just lunch,' Marjorie said, roaming about the comfortable room. She stopped for a moment to look out at her own garden. She lived in that hilly part of Cannes, outside the town, which is known to the inhabitants as California. 'But do you think Ricky regards it as just lunch?'

'I know nothing whatsoever about Ricky, as you call him,' Lily said, applying delicate shoring operations to her own make-up. 'I only think it's odd to be so—so—shy. Is that what it is?'

'Shy?' Marjorie echoed.

Then she circled round the room again and came over toward Lily with a motion of the whole body, as if it might have been (and indeed it might well have been) beyond her control or even resistance.

'Please, Lily,' she said, 'don't get excited about Ricardo.'

At least, not too much. It's no good. We aren't particularly friends, I shouldn't say—at least we're only friends in an ordinary sort of way—but I like you, and I think you've got a right to live your own life. You've done so. I believe you've done damned well at it, if you ask me. Don't go messing it up with Ricky.'

'Serious?' Lily asked, eyeing herself in the glass. 'Well, dear, considering that I only saw the man for the first time an hour and twenty or thirty minutes ago, I think your admonitions are premature.'

'Speak English!' Marjorie said on a kind of outgoing breath like a sigh, but sustaining the words. 'Speak English, speak English! Sometimes I think that you took that as your motto years ago. . . . My admonitions are not premature. They are in fact antiquated to the point of being useless.'

'What's the matter with the man?' Lily asked coolly, turning away from the dressing table. 'You might as well tell me, since you seem to know.'

'It won't help a bit if you're really interested,' Marjorie said. 'I've seen them, so many of them, so many. I could tell you whatever I chose and it could make no difference.'

'Suppose you just tell me one thing,' Lily suggested, without the slightest edge in voice or intention. She really wanted to know. 'What is the matter with him?'

'It's impossible to say precisely, without going into a complexity of subjects which—if you'll forgive me—I don't think concern or interest you. Ricky has very little time for human relationships. He is only about half here. He dwells elsewhere. His loves and hates and friendships, his passions, are dated before they begin. There is a word in Spanish, a verb, meaning to make permanent or to live permanently or to cause to endure permanently. The infinitive is *permanecer*. *Permanecer* is the one thing Ricky cannot possibly do. The word even means to stay—it's

used in the newspapers as an equivalent for staying in one place, such as Cannes, even for relatively short periods. If a person stays in one place for quite a while that verb is used. *Permanecer* in Biarritz. Such a pity we don't have a word like that in English!

'Even if we had it,' Lily observed, rising from the *poudreuse*, 'we should have nothing to which it might be applied.'

She touched Marjorie on the arm.

'Isn't this merely Don Juan that you're talking about?' she asked. 'Isn't it the oldest and stalest of all Spanish legends? A masculine delusion? A search for nothing, successful at last in finding nothing?'

'The exact opposite!' Marjorie proclaimed with emphasis, putting her scrawny brown claw over Lily's hand. 'Ricky has never sought. He has never pursued. He has been sought. He has been pursued. He is in flight. He is in *full* flight.'

Marjorie was a celebrated novelist in England (and even elsewhere). She was somewhat given to framing her pictures. Lily allowed for that and went on.

'He's a fly-by-night, then, I gather,' she said, 'and I can believe it. But is there any reason why I should not regard this fly-by-night as the most attractive man I have seen for a long time? I speak for common sense, Marjorie. I don't write clever books for clever people. My humble origins, which you have infallibly detected and misunderstood, have bestowed on me the clairvoyance of the poor. I *know* when King Midas has asses' ears.'

'This isn't King Midas,' said Marjorie, somewhat bewildered, as they made their way toward the stairs.

'Of course not,' Lily murmured. '*Au contraire . . .*'

She picked up her rather long dress and looked at the steps as they descended. Marjorie's scrawny claw was still on her wrist.

'But do you not understand,' Lily asked, 'that I don't care? You call him Ricky.'

'Ricky's as good a name as any other,' Marjorie said. (This was when Lily acquired the suspicion that Ricardo might not be his real name.)

'Whatever you call him,' Lily pursued, 'I find that he does *not* have asses' ears. I have met many kings with asses' ears. May I enjoy the novelty of a king without them?'

'You may enjoy it,' Marjorie said, suddenly laughing, 'but in God's name be careful! Really, Lily, you're a caution—so wise and so foolish!'

Marjorie Wogan had earned no laurels as a protector of the defenceless, and yet in this contingency, unforeseen by all, she tried to safeguard those whom she had unwittingly exposed to hazard. The French painter perceived that his presence meant nothing and departed in a huff. Mr. Ricardo sat at a metal table on the gravelled terrace and looked at the sea. Marjorie Wogan clattered with coffee cups, liqueur glasses and her own voice, which had unexpectedly developed altitudes and decibels. Mrs. Soames sat beside Mr. Ricardo at the small metal table and also looked at the sea. There was only a tiny patch of sea to be seen from this hedged-in hillside, but the tiny patch was blue.

'That man!' Mrs. Wogan was going on, parcelling out the liqueurs which nobody wanted. 'He was an agnostic or an atheist or whatever it was he called himself for twenty or thirty or forty years, rigidly and religiously opposed to any form of organized worship. Now what do you suppose he's doing? He's painting an entire chapel, four walls and a ceiling, and it will take him the rest of his mortal life, and although he may pile up merit in heaven he'll get no recompense of any sort on earth, because he's going to have all his saints dismembered,



with one green eye in one red foot and a prismatic vision of paradise over the left kidney. It's not the sort of thing that the nuns appreciate, and I hardly think the Cardinal Archbishop will smile upon it. It would have been so much better if he had passed through the ritualistic obsession in his first youth, when it would have attracted no attention. At present he is too celebrated to be ignored.'

'Is he celebrated?' Ricardo asked.

Marjorie began to laugh and succumbed into a metal chair from sheer inability to stand erect.

'Oh, dear, oh, dear,' she gasped, wiping her eyes. 'Ricky, you're such an idiot!' Her laughter concerned much more than the painter who had taken his departure; they all understood that. It was a large laughter involving many things.

'I never did hear his name,' Ricardo said.

'And I shall never tell you,' Marjorie said, still struggling with her painful mirth. 'Never, never! He's probably the most famous painter in the whole world, and he's been treated like a leper, and he'll never speak to me again, and I don't care! I think it's so—so—gh-ghastly funny!'

She was not only laughing but shivering. Lily Soames put her own hand over Marjorie's.

'Don't bother about it, dear,' she said. 'It's nice here. Look at the sea.'

'That V-neck?' Marjorie asked. 'How I've always wanted something more bosomy. It's a wretched little spot.' Her laughter was subsiding; so was her voice. 'I inherited it. I don't want to live in a salad. My aunt Ermytrude left it to me. She was the relict of an Edwardian diplomatist who wasted his virility on moustaches and side-burns, so they had no children and I eventuated. Here I am, fifty-five years old and growing up, hemmed in by greenery, with a view of the sea that

is considerably less than Homeric. Don't blame me for laughing. Do you want more coffee?

'Do you think that hair has something to do with virility?' Ricardo asked, interested. 'I believe some of the ancients thought so, and it is still believed in parts of the world. There are sects in India which give a religious interpretation to it.'

'I don't know anything about it,' Marjorie replied. 'I can remember once when we went up the Tibidabo in Barcelona on the tramcar. Do you remember that, Ricardo?'

'No,' he said in transparent honesty.

'Oh, you *can't* have forgotten! The car was packed to the absolute limit with people hanging on all around it in the most precarious positions. We were on the back platform, squeezed to a jelly. We were going to the British Hospital, I on my errands of mercy and you as my guide. I had only been in Barcelona a few days and every detail was—was—new. Perhaps for you . . .'

'I do not remember,' he said.

Marjorie was tall, blue-eyed, willowy and unbeautiful with no particular deviation from beauty, but simply an absence of it. Her mouth, shoulders and hips were, in their several ways, horizontally rectangular. The biggest of these was by anatomical rule the hips, but the other rectangles were also large with respect to function. Her skin was sprinkled with small, faded freckles, like golden shadowy insects across a withering screen. She had abundant hair of a colour which, however often renewed, remained nondescript, and seemed more nondescript (more 'hair-coloured', muckle-dun) the more she caused it to be waved and brushed and twisted into becoming shapes. Her large, intelligent and suffering eyes, deep blue, were the illumination of her presence, but sometimes they seemed like a splendid light on a dreary suburb.

She dressed well, but her long, clawlike, nervous hand had nothing whatever to do with the silks and satins they forever stroked. Lily, considering her idly and with less than half a mind, thought that Marjorie Wogan could not possibly have owned, to any degree, the allegiance of this quixotic and quintessential Spaniard. Of course he had forgotten the journey in a tramcar to the top of the Tibidabo. How could he *not* have forgotten?

'This coast would be civilized,' Ricardo said after an appreciable silence, 'even if there were no people here.'

Marjorie, of course, knew what he was talking about and said nothing. The observation was not new to her.

'Do you mean the sea and the rocks?' Lily asked. 'How can that be?' She was not consciously appealing to his masculine vanity, his desire to expound. She said what came into her head.

'They are!' he said. He waved his bony hand in the air. 'They are! Do you suppose this Latin sea came to rest in the north for no reason? You call this the south. For us it is the north. This is the northern edge or rim of the Latin sea. In Spain and even in Italy this sea can be wild, and here it is tame. Civilization is the taming of the wild.'

'Therefore the sea is civilized?' Lily asked. 'Forgive me, but this must be romanticism. There ought to be some scientific reason why it pushes harder lower down. It isn't merely that the sea decided to become civilized and acquired a passport on arriving in France.'

'I did not say so,' he protested. 'I only said that the phenomenon called civilization, which is the taming of the wild, may be studied from the sea and the rocks. The Mediterranean is fatigued here. It is too far up. It has gone beyond its natural field, it is tired and it does not push.'

'It doesn't push on the south side either,' Marjorie said with some acidity, as if the matter involved her personally. 'North Africa hasn't any surf, and except for a few places along the Tunisian coast there isn't a rock that looks in the least tortured. Think of the beach at Mondello, outside of Palermo! It's a huge bowl of tepid soup.'

'That's another extreme,' Ricardo said. 'The sea is exhausted. Therefore it becomes civilized.'

'Is civilization, then, merely exhaustion?' Lily asked.

'I didn't say so,' Ricardo said pedantically, as if he were addressing an audience somewhere else. 'I said that the exhaustion of the barbaric, which is a negative way of stating the taming of the wild, *was* civilization. We do not need to know whether the barbaric exhausts itself through over-exertion or whether it succumbs to gentler influences. We only know that when the wild sea grows calm it acquires a frame of this species.'

Marjorie was irritated and could not conceal it.

'There is no subject in this world,' she said, 'on which otherwise intelligent men can make such fools of themselves as the Mediterranean Ocean. I once asked an eminent geographer why the Mediterranean had little or no tide and he gave me two explanations which contradicted each other. He was so lost in his theoretical mumbo-jumbo that he didn't notice.'

'My dear Marjorie,' Ricardo said mildly, 'this isn't a battle! It's not politics!'

'What is it?' she asked.

'Do you remember,' he asked, smiling at that far-off V-neck of the sea, 'once when I drove you up from Barcelona along what we call in Spain the Costa Brava? That sea was not civilized that day.'

'I do not remember,' Marjorie said deliberately.

Lily was quite certain that she did remember, and that this was a weak revenge; the whole conversation held

some other, some more intimate meaning, which did not appear in the words.

'No matter,' Ricardo pronounced under his breath. And then, resuming: 'The Latin sea has limits which it acknowledges. It may rage at the verges of Italy and Spain. It may gnaw at Greece. It touches France and Africa with extended hand and bloodless finger. It is capable of tremendous fury within its own family. It is harsh to its children. It is polite to strangers.'

'Well,' said Marjorie, 'I'm terribly sorry you don't care for the view. It's the best Aunt Ermyntrode could provide. She didn't have a very profound understanding of oceanography or perhaps she'd have built this house on Corsica or Elba. And then, too, there was her rheumatism, you know. No old lady could live without rheumatism in those days, and it was thought that the sea mist was bad for it. She was a stranger, and civilized too, perhaps. That's why we are perched up here in the salad.'

To Lily this sounded like a definite *congé*. She got up slowly, aware of her own movements and of the articulation of breast and hip under the pale-pink silk, beautifully rough and dull, which clung advantageously to her body.

'I've had a wonderful lunch, Marjorie,' she said. 'The food and the company were divine. I must go now. You will telephone, I hope?'

'Well, you must have a taxi,' said Marjorie, somewhat flustered on a sudden. 'I'd forgotten—my car's gone out marketing. I'm so sorry. I've nothing to give you.'

'I can drive Madame wherever she likes,' Ricardo said, very soberly and without bow or smile. 'You know that I always have that object with me.'

Marjorie smiled bitterly.

'That object!' she said. 'That's what we always called it. But surely it can't be the same object?'

'Oh, no,' he said airily. 'It's about Object Number Five or Six since you drove in it. But it's the same kind. I never have any other.'

'Beware,' Marjorie said to Lily. 'If you drive with Ricardo in any of these objects of his you are taking your life in your hands. But something tells me you took your life in your hands long ago.'

'I did,' said Lily tranquilly.

Mrs. Wogan was almost a foot taller; she looked down at Lily now and squeezed the ends of her fingers.

'All right, Lily,' she said. 'Or would it be better to make it O.K.? I'm a mariner without a compass when it comes to Americanisms. I know them all but I use them wrong every time. I've had thousands of letters about small errors of the kind in books of mine.'

'I've forgotten quite a few myself,' Lily protested, ill at ease. 'Marjorie, dear, what's the matter? You don't suddenly have to start saying O.K. to me. Say whatever you want to say.'

'I'll say O.K.,' Marjorie declared. 'Let us join the majority. I believe that the principal task of the vanquished is to learn the language of the conqueror.'

Ricardo, emerging from the lavatory in the hall, heard this last statement.

'You're wrong, it's the other way round,' he said. 'The conqueror has to learn the language of the vanquished. Only by doing so can he remain conqueror.'

The soft, warm and sunny afternoon was somehow dripping, not with rain and not with sweat, but with September warmth exuding a wetness of no source. Only Ricardo was not uncomfortable. Marjorie put her handkerchief to her brow with unaffected weariness.

'Oh, go away, you two,' she said. 'It was lovely to have you up here on my hilltop but it'll be lovely when you go. And when you come again.'

Ricardo kissed her hand and followed Lily out into the courtyard where the stripped-down, low-slung, long and very slim object was lying. That is what it looked like—like something lying on the ground.

‘It’s a kind of gondola,’ said Lily, waiting for him to open the door for her. ‘If I lean my hand over I shall trail my fingers in the dust.’

‘Yes, you would, but I shall not allow it. I drive fast but I permit no unnecessary danger.’

When they pulled out of the gravelled courtyard with a peculiar, even and rather loud noise, Lily caught a glimpse of Marjorie standing in the door-way. It was not possible to be sure, but a sudden glitter gave the notion that Marjorie had tears in her eyes.

For some time there was no speech in the long, low car. It did not even have a windshield, and Lily felt the whip of the wind. The man was driving in the wrong direction, somewhere back into the hills, but it made no difference. She experienced a glow of excitement at being there on the seat with him in this extraordinary vehicle.

They came to a village after a while and he stopped in the little square by the church.

‘Do you like my car?’ he asked without looking at her, and then turned and gave her a penetrating look of eyes darker (suddenly, now) than she had hitherto supposed. ‘Who are you, really?’ he asked gravely.

‘I could ask the same,’ she replied. ‘However, my name is Lily Soames. I’m an American woman. I live at the hotel, and I think you ought to be driving me in that direction pretty soon.’

‘To live in a hotel,’ he said, ‘is not an occupation. You must have other things to do.’

‘I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter,’ she said demurely. (The devil may quote T. S. Eliot to

his purpose, she thought—even though it be lost on such as this.)

‘You call this the South,’ he said, lifting his head. ‘I have already said that to me it is north. Are you idle, idle, idle?’

‘Not really,’ she mused. ‘I keep pretty busy. I can’t think why it matters to you, but the fact is that I hardly have an idle moment. Even if I’m only getting my toenails done I’m busy. No doubt you have matters of much greater import to occupy you.’

‘What did Marjorie tell you?’ he asked, frowning.

‘That she met you by chance down by the port and asked you to lunch,’ she informed him. ‘Also that she hadn’t seen you for years. That was all.’

‘She didn’t say anything about—about where and how she knew me before?’ he asked, biting his lip in a *tic* which looked as if it accompanied thought. (The *tic* was there, and he bit his lip to control it.) He was also frowning, but not at Lily, rather at his own folded bony hands on the wheel.

‘Not a word,’ said Lily. ‘Of course it wasn’t difficult to guess that you had known one another before, and rather well, from what you were both saying after lunch. Moreover, it was moderately clear, even to the idlest of idle women, that you had known each other in Barcelona and along the Catalan coast. That was plain.’

The motor had been going all this time. Now the car began to move and to turn around the square as if to return to Cannes.

‘It’s a pretty little church,’ he said, ‘and so’s the village, I drive up simply to look at it.’

They were silent again for a while.

‘It was at least fourteen years ago, perhaps more than that, perhaps fifteen,’ he said.

‘What was?’

'The time she was talking about, when we went up the Tibidabo on the tram to the English hospital.'

'So you knew what she meant all the time?'

'No. But I have since remembered.'

'And when you drove her along the Costa Brava, which she pretended to have forgotten . . .'

'It was *that same time*, perhaps a week or so later. Does the time, the date, fourteen or fifteen years ago, mean nothing to you?'

Lily reflected. Fifteen years ago she had been travelling in Europe with Steve; they were by that time extremely well off; it was only about four years before he died, and she had learned so many things she never could really share with him because he had no interest in them. Well, Barcelona . . . They had not been able to go to Spain at that time.

'It must have been,' she said, calculating, 'during the Spanish Civil War. Is that it?'

'That is it. Marjorie was there on some benevolent junket or other for some committee of worthy ladies in London, who did not want to give us material or military aid, of course, but were happy to contribute bandages. We met. I was invalided out of the Spanish army at that time and was working for the Foreign Office.'

'That is, the Spanish Republican Army?'

'Of course. What other?'

CHAPTER TWO

THE PALE-BLUE gauze of the curtains over Lily's balcony billowed out in the wind. It was approaching noon and she was about to dress. The massage was over. The bath was over. She wore a dressing gown which approximated nothing. She looked out at the sea and thought of the Spaniard.

'Why does he not telephone?' she asked the gentle wind. 'It is easy to telephone. It is not dangerous.'

And then she remembered that extraordinary afternoon in which he had taken her down to the port and refused to go with her to the hotel. It was only the day before yesterday.

'I don't know anything about political disputes,' she had said to him in the small tubular car. 'I don't know why you should have been in the Spanish Republican Army or in any other army. To me it is another language.'

'You women!' he said. 'You know nothing of this and nothing of that, and you determine it all in your way. If you—that is, women like you—had not been frightened of the Spanish Republic, the whole world would have been different to-day.'

His hawkish face set in even harder lines.

'I suggest that you are telling a lie,' he said.

She thought it over. Yes, at that time—fourteen or fifteen years ago?—it is true that she had resented the

Spanish war, without knowing much about it, but she had indeed resented it because she and Steve could not go to Spain. She had never been to Spain.

'I think you ought to understand,' she said at length, 'that I am not at all political, and I am scarcely at all intellectual. Marjorie Wogan would be able to discuss these things with you. I cannot. I do not tell lies. I tell the truth whenever it does not pass beyond the bounds of decency.'

There was a tremendous burst of speed from the stripped-down car and they found themselves in Cannes, but down by the port.

'Let us leave this here,' he said in a side street which smelled of fish and coffee. 'I don't want to take it to your hotel. It is too noticeable.'

She wanted to say: What of you, what of you? He was amongst created beings what his car was amongst toys, noticeable.

'My dear Mr. Ricardo,' she said equably, 'I am willing to be disgorged wherever you wish to disgorge me, but I must say you are rather cool. You spoke of driving me home.'

'It isn't far,' he said, locking the car and putting a padlock on the wheel. 'Please don't think I'm inventing difficulties. I have been at various times quite well known at your hotel. I'd rather not attract attention.'

She stood impassively smoothing her gloves each against the other.

'Lady,' he said, throwing out both his hands, 'I should not be here at all if I did not feel strongly drawn toward you! I do not know why. For me it is dangerous.'

Her eyes, lucid blue, looked up at him without any expression that could have been named except complete candour.

'I accept what you say,' she told him, 'although I do

not know why. Would you rather have me walk home alone? Or, in fact, I can get a taxi-cab somewhere here on the water front.'

'I will walk with you part of the way,' he said submissively, bowing that extraordinary head with the three arrows of white hair. 'It doesn't matter much. It's only that I don't want to attract attention to myself.'

This time, as they began to walk, she summoned up her courage and said it.

'Wherever you go,' she said, 'you will attract attention. Are you so devoid of common sense that you do not realize it? Have you no mirror, in whatever lair you may have elected, have you no mirror?'

'I know I look odd here,' he said quite humbly. 'That is why I try to stay down in the port area. I don't go near your hotel or the Casinos or the beaches. I was once well known there.'

'I have not the remotest notion of what causes you to behave like this,' she said, 'and I do not care. But I am a reasonable woman and I must tell you that if you think you pass unperceived anywhere you are mistaken.'

He reached out and touched her hand, the right hand which held both her gloves.

'Lady,' he said, 'I am foolish. But I am attracted by you. Could that be my excuse?'

'It is an excuse,' she admitted. 'I do not deny it.'

A man who looked extremely drunk, with a misshapen black felt hat pulled far over one eye, lurched against them and reeled back against the sea wall.

'*Compañero!*' he said.

'*Compañero!*' said Lily's companion, and walked on.

She was chilled by that encounter for some reason, although she supposed that Spanish Republicans, if that was what he was, must speak to each other in their own language occasionally. The market-women and the

fishermen and the shoppers jostled along the pavement and the sea was brilliantly blue.

'As an ordinary person, behaving like other ordinary persons, I should like to ask you to come and see me,' she said. 'And yet, with all this . . . !' She flicked her gloves in the air. 'Well, do I dare ask?'

'For the present I have gone as far as I should like to go on this afternoon,' he said. 'Your hotel is a short walk ahead now. In that part of the town I might meet acquaintances whom I do not wish to see.'

'This is absurd,' she protested. 'I should like to see you again, frankly, and you me, as I am aware. Then why not?'

'It's just—I've told you—your particular hotel and its frequentations are not for me. Believe me, I've committed no crime. The police are not interested in me, I believe. I just don't want to see a lot of—of—ghosts.'

'Goodness, you're difficult!' she sighed, looking up at him. 'Well, you know my name. It's Mrs. Soames. You know my hotel. Telephone. Perhaps there is some other place less ghost-ridden where we might have dinner. I have an engagement to-night but I shall throw it over at once if you say so.'

'I do say so,' he declared, pressing her hand with painful fervour. 'Let me telephone in two or three hours—say at six o'clock. We can name a place. I should like to take you to dinner down in a Spanish place I know. It is called the Bodega Malagueña. It is behind the water front, in the port district, rather difficult to find, but a good place where I have friends. I could meet you along the walk in front of the hotel. I will telephone at six.'

She thought mystification unnecessary but yielded to it.

'At six then,' she said, allowing her hand to be kissed, and then, with an instinct of mockery she added: '*Caballero.*'

She walked on to the hotel and addressed herself severely. Lily Soames, she said, Lily Soames, you are forty years old and ought to have more sense. What is there about this absurd Spaniard that draws your whole internal organism out toward him? In the afternoon she lay on the beach and hardly spoke to an acquaintance; her mind was busy with this anomaly, and at times there was a curious somnolent happiness about it. At a quarter to six she was back in her room awaiting his telephone call, which came promptly.

'At eight o'clock,' he told her, 'I shall be waiting by the sea wall a little down from your hotel.'

They dined in a place the like of which she had never seen before. It was a haunt of Spanish gypsies and reminded her of the second act of *Carmen*, except that it was so much smaller. The waitress—there was only one—wore full skirts, a shawl and a rose in her hair, although her face did not indicate either youth or deliberate coquetry. Three or four lean men sat about the tables in the vine-covered courtyard, drinking sherry. The place was hotel, wineshop, grocery and restaurant all in one. She acquiesced in everything he ordered for food and drink. It turned out to be a *paella valenciana*, wonderfully various in undefinable tastes, with a clear bright-red wine of Alella. Afterwards there was a salad and then at his insistence a *turrón de Alicante*. As a rule Lily never ate such sweet things, but she was reckless of her figure to-night. The whole meal was amazingly good, totally un-French, and so far as Lily could remember it was unfamiliar from beginning to end.

Then they drank a strong, sweet coffee and some Spanish brandy, Fundador, which he said belonged with such a meal.

The man was a magician in that he kept her full attention even when she did not altogether know what he

was saying. He did not pay court to her obviously, and yet his every glance, every tone of voice, was a form of homage. Sometimes their knees touched, sometimes their hands. He talked about his childhood in Castile and how steep the hills were there, with brown rocks and villagers just as brown and rocky. His own village was not far from Avila, and she spoke of Santa Teresa, thoughtlessly, by association of ideas rather than by any intention. At once his body grew tense and she could see the tendons in his hands intensify their hardness.

'What do you know of Teresa de Avila?' he asked.

'Oh, nothing, nothing,' she said. 'I have read a few books, that's all. She was a very great woman.'

'She was a woman of my earth,' he said.

Even though Lily did not know Spanish, she felt that this expression was something from his own language. His English pronunciation and grammar were without defect. Sometimes he used a turn of phrase which was not English at all, and this was one. At other times it would have been impossible to know from his speech alone that he was Spanish. In his appearance there could never have been any mistake.

'Were you at school in England?' she asked idly, above all because she was afraid to pursue the subject of Teresa de Avila any further. (It brought a fierceness which almost frightened her.) 'So it seems from your voice.'

'I was at that place called Eton,' he said, his mouth slightly twisted in a smile. 'I was one of the Dagoes there. Do you know what a Dago is?'

'Where I came from,' she said, 'a Dago was chiefly an Italian. But it was a meaningless word—it could apply to anybody who wasn't exactly like anybody else.'

'It means simply Diego,' he said, 'which is in fact one of my names.'

'Your names!' she said softly. 'I imagine they are

many and very beautiful. Antonio and Francisco and Andrés and Ildefonso.'

He laughed, not at all in the irony that seemed a part of him, but in simple laughter as of one amused.

'You've got three of them,' he said, 'but I can't claim Ildefonso. That isn't mine. But you've forgotten Ricardo.'

'I thought that was your family name,' she said demurely, knowing perfectly well—from the faint indications given that day at lunch—that this was not the case.

'Oh, well, perhaps it is,' he said, the merriment gone again. 'It can't matter much. Lily, I am not for you.'

She looked at him very straight across the table.

'I never thought you were,' she said.

A fat woman in a voluminous flowered skirt with a black shawl on her shoulders came out and stamped her feet. Several men drifted in from the bar-room. One of the lean Spaniards against the wall of the courtyard began to strum a guitar furiously.

'*Olé!*' said the fat woman indolently.

Several cries of '*Olé*' arose.

'Everybody in the South, where these people come from, can dance more or less,' Ricardo said. 'This one is fat and old but she knows how. It's simply racial, I suppose.'

'You are not the same breed as these people, it is easy to see,' she remarked. 'I suppose all the—the cranial measurements, and all that, are different.'

'We are very different,' he conceded, 'but I can't tell you why. They are closer to the Arab, I suppose. But there must be some Arab in all of us.'

Arab, she mused, looking at him with the concentration she was unable to conceal. Arab. Yes, he might be Arab, but of an extremely unmixed strain, from the desert, perhaps, carrying off women at his saddle-bow . . .

'I really think I ought to go home,' she said. 'I'm enjoying myself, but . . .'

'But what?'

'I find you a little heady, Ricárdo. You make me think of things which are, under the circumstances, absurd.'

'What things?' he asked caressingly. His eyes held hers for a long moment.

When they got up to go, half an hour later, she felt that all her defences had broken down. She had made abundantly clear, to a man of his intelligence and experience, that she would like him to come home with her; and this in spite of the fact that she heartily disapproved, on principle and by policy, of such precipitation. Headlong impulse had not governed the circumstances under which Lily Soames had made two advantageous marriages and achieved her present status. Headlong impulse had in fact seldom governed anything in Lily's life. It looked rather as if something of the kind were in control now, for she felt both helpless and filled with desire. She would not be able to resist anything he asked, and she trembled with fear that he would ask nothing. For her this was absurd; it was unlike anything known to her before; she had always been strong, stronger than the others, able to control them because she controlled herself. The warmth of the starry night over the port assailed her like a drug.

'When we get to the hotel,' she murmured, 'there will be nobody to be seen, nobody to see you. It's an off hour—half-past ten. You need not be afraid to come in.'

'Afraid?' he echoed. The word did not please him. He hailed a taxicab.

CHAPTER THREE

NOW IT was noon, and past, two full days later, and to-day he had not telephoned. She went back to her bedroom and dressed. Françoise, the robot maid, was skilful and silent in her ministrations, but suddenly Lily felt her presence to be alien, possibly even critical or inimical.

'Go on down and have your lunch,' she said. 'I'm all right now. I don't need you again until this afternoon, late.'

'Madame can ring the bell,' said Françoise.

Wooden woman! Wooden life!

Lily went back into the sitting room again and watched the gauzy curtains blow in the breeze from the balcony. The ridiculous little ivory-coated telephone was obstinately still. Ricardo had not promised to telephone. She had told him to do so, or assumed that he would, she could not remember which. It was only natural that he should do so, after two such nights. She had, in fact, cancelled her engagement for lunch in the hope that she could lunch with him in the little Spanish place—the Bodega Malagueña—where they had dined on both of the preceding nights. What was insane and a little indecent, somehow, was that she had no idea of where he lived.

Now, she thought, at this moment in time, when a paralysing experience had thrown her normal ways of

thought into such disorder that she could hardly recognize her behaviour as her own, Mr. Henry McK. Soames elected to descend upon her. She would have to telegraph or telephone—put him off, somehow. She was in no mood for the encounter, which otherwise, as a contest of wits, might have amused her. In the ordinary way she could always manage Henry. But now . . . !

The telephone rang at last. She picked it up with an unfamiliar tremor in her throat and voice. It was a dress-maker, asking for an extra fitting. She hardly knew what she answered—something about waiting another week or making an engagement later. She put the ivory instrument back into its cradle and stared out at the sunny sea.

He was not going to telephone. She knew that now because it was almost half-past one and anybody who intended to eat lunch would be doing so by this time. Over there at the Ambassadeurs people were eating lunch now. Lily should have been there, with a party of Americans and English and French, but it was too late now. She must eat lunch alone.

She got up and walked the length of the sitting room two or three times. There was some obsessive monster taking possession of her. She had never been in this situation before; she had never cared enough about any man, or they had cared too much about her to permit it to happen. She could not endure the thought of eating lunch alone in her hotel sitting room. She was a woman of many resources, and since the boarding-house days in far-off Albuquerque she had learned how books, music and pictures can reward time. She had taken to 'culture' like a duck to water, as soon as its limpid, aqueous surface had been presented to her. But at this moment she could no more have read a book, listened to music or looked at a picture than conversed with the man in the moon. But that, perhaps, and precisely, only that, was

what she really wanted, she reflected wryly: to converse with the man in the moon. Ricardo was in effect rather like the man in the moon; although possessed of the most incontrovertible proofs of ordinary masculine humanity, there was something in him which belonged to another luminary than this earth, and dwelt unassailable, even unreachable, at least by her. She had learned it early. What could she do?

There was the possibility of telephoning to Marjorie. But Mrs. Wogan was a busy woman, an eminently successful English novelist on the Riviera, true to the species in having every hour of every day somehow occupied or provided for in advance. Marjorie Wogan would be lunching out, or having guests in, one or the other. And what would she say, anyhow? 'Oh, my dear, so soon? I warned you against Ricky. And besides, I told you I only met him by chance down at the port. I haven't any notion of where he might be living.' That was the kind of thing she would say in her brisk, cool voice, adding some slight milligram of humiliation to Lily's bewilderment and anger.

The only thing was to go back to the Bodega. Lily, surveying herself in the glass, decided that she was absurdly overdressed for such a place: her hat, gloves, dress and shoes were all part of a careful design which betrayed in its harmonious progressions not only the hand of an artist but the income of the wearer. She took it all off and put it on the bed: it would give Françoise something to do when she came back. Instead of these she picked out a plain white linen dress and a golden-brown beret which became her well without suggesting—to the unknowing—any great expense. It was warm; it was not yet two o'clock; she could go to the Malagueña if she could find it.

On both previous occasions it had been dark when she got there. Ricardo left the taxi near the sea front and

took her into the maze of little streets behind it. She did not know precisely which of these streets to choose, but there were not many and she could find it.

She took a taxicab from the hotel and repeated the motions she had made with Ricardo last night and the night before. Dismissing the cab at the port, she made her way in the general direction that she remembered. At the second turning she saw the *étalage* of the Spanish grocery, a show window full of cans of sardines, *turrone*s, wine bottles and peppers. In the daytime it looked a poor place, not designed to call attention to itself or to invite strangers. The small painted wooden sign beside it said, discreetly: Bodega Malagueña. She knew that the entrance to the small hotel and courtyard was between the grocery and the little wineshop café. She went in, down the corridor as before, and out into the patio.

It looked dismal, dirty, deserted. She went to a table in one corner, inside the shaded gallery which ran all around the place, and waited. After what seemed a long time the fat woman in the full skirts came out and said '*Bon jour, Madame.*' She was not unfriendly, but she looked as if she had slept very late and not taken the trouble to wash, and perhaps therefore her morning manners (at two o'clock in the afternoon) could not compete with her evening manners. For some reason she was quite unlike what Lily remembered from last night and the night before. The sunlight of Cannes took much from her, but perhaps there was not much to take anyhow.

'Is it possible to have lunch?' Lily asked desperately. She did not really want lunch, but it seemed to her now that she must eat or she would have no avenue of approach to this blowsy, tired and indifferent woman.

From the blotched menu presented to her Lily picked out an egg dish and asked for Malaga as an *apéritif*. This too, was in reality to obtain the fat woman's favour:

Malaga was too heavy and sweet for Lily's taste. Moreover, she could not read the menu, which was dirty and smeared and all written in Spanish; she had never seen a menu here before, because Ricardo ordered without one. She knew the word for eggs, but her Spanish was quite inadequate to the lewd joke which the fat woman automatically made as she took the order.

'Oh, Lordy, Lordy!' Lily admonished herself, lighting a cigarette. 'What am I doing here?'

The pavement of the tiny courtyard had not been swept since the night before, if then. It was rather rough and it was strange that anybody would be able to dance on it. There were dirty cigarette ends everywhere. Two chairs on the other side had been overturned beside a dirty table and nobody had taken the trouble to set them straight. There were staircases on both sides of the patio, leading to two upper floors which contained, as Lily supposed or had been told, the bedrooms of the hotel. She wondered if Ricardo himself possibly could live here. That thought had been at the bottom of her mind for two days. He seemed so secretive, so intent on staying out of the way of anybody he might know, that this might be the retreat to which he repaired. And yet she doubted it. He was clean, almost fastidiously clean, his linen perfect, and surely this was not, even for secrecy, his kind of place.

The egg dish proved to be scrambled eggs with tomatoes, peppers and garlic, all cooked in olive oil. The oil was so strong that Lily could hardly eat at all. There was some good black bread and that helped; the fat woman brought wine of Alella without being told to do so.

'Tell me, madame,' Lily said politely and slowly, conscious that the fat woman's French probably had severe limits, 'have you seen Señor Ricardo to-day?'

'No,' the woman said. 'I have not seen him.'

Her face grew mulishly expressionless, as if she resented being asked the question.

'We dined here last night,' Lily went on.

'I know.'

'I had rather hoped to see him to-day.'

The woman knocked a fly off her own nose expertly.

'I will ask,' she said, 'if anybody has seen him.'

She went away and Lily struggled with the egg dish. She did not want to leave it uneaten but it was an unpleasant task, above all as she was not hungry. The black bread and Alella made it possible to progress, although slowly, through the fumes of oil and garlic.

'Could I have some coffee?' she asked when the woman returned.

'Señor Ricardo,' the woman said, clearing the table, 'has probably gone away. I asked the men. They think so.'

'Gone away!' Lily repeated. (The word was *parti*.) 'But he said nothing to me about it.'

'He may not have known, last night,' the woman said indifferently. 'It is thus.'

Lily dwelt over the strong black coffee and her American cigarettes. Was there anything else she could ask? Was there anything these people knew or would be willing to tell? And would Ricardo be annoyed when they reported her visit, her questions?

She felt, most of all, bewildered. How *could* he be away, and where, without one word? The French word *parti*, for example, what did it exactly mean? Did it mean he had departed from Cannes, departed from the Spanish inn, departed from France? It might even mean, Lily reflected, departed from life. When the fat woman came back and began to sweep the pavement without enthusiasm or much effect Lily called to her.

'Madame,' she inquired, 'when you say *il est parti* what

exactly do you mean? Has he gone away from the town? Is that it?

'He has gone away from the town,' the woman said. 'That is what the men say. I do not know. Madame wishes to pay?'

Lily paid and left the dingy courtyard slowly. At the door of the wineshop she looked in. Three or four men were sitting at a table playing dominoes. They did not stir. They looked like workmen or fishermen or boatmen and she could not tell whether they were French or Spanish. She went on out and walked along the water front, looking absently at the boats. Before long she was in a more familiar part of the town and a taxicab swung up beside her. When she got into it and was about to name the hotel—no distance away now; she could have walked it—an impulse came over her and she yielded. She gave the address of Marjorie Wogan's villa up in the hills called California.

It would do no good. She realized that. Marjorie knew no more than she did—except, that is, of things that had happened fourteen or fifteen years ago. But even on these, if she would talk, whatever she said would be of some help, because it would be on the subject. At the present moment Lily was in no mood to talk of anything else, and the only person remaining to whom she could talk was Marjorie. The fat woman at the Bodega and Marjorie were the only living connections she had to with that strange plumed Spaniard who had disappeared. What a grotesquerie this was for Lily Soames, vanquisher of this and all other systems! She powdered her nose as the taxi paused on the gravel drive between the orange trees.

It was half-past three in the afternoon but by good fortune Marjorie was in. She was neither asleep nor working, simply in.

'I've just been reading the morning's mail,' she said as she greeted Lily in the hall. 'I didn't have time before. It's nothing, anyhow, but it has to be read. How lovely you look!'

'Do I?' Lily asked indifferently. The admiration of other women had never meant anything to her unless it referred to an achievement of toilette or a concrete possession. 'If I do, it's by sheer chance. I feel pretty glum.'

'What's the matter?' Marjorie asked, leading the way to the little flagged terrace where there was the V-neck view of the sea.

'Oh, it's your Spanish friend,' Lily said, sitting down in one of the bouncy metal chairs. 'I've dined with him the past two nights running and I'm consumed with curiosity about him. Where does he live, for instance?'

'I haven't the wildest notion,' Marjorie said. 'Will you have some coffee? I'll ring.'

'I didn't suppose you knew his address in Cannes, or anything so prosaic as that, if indeed he has an address,' Lily said. 'But what in God's name is the creature, anyhow? How does he live, where does he come from, what does he do? Is he just a bird on the bough? Does he flit?'

'He certainly flits,' Marjorie said, drawing deep on a cigarette. 'Flit he does.'

She considered her own smoke in the air for a while, grey-blue against the golden-blue light, and then added: 'But he also sings.'

'He's gone,' Lily said. 'By which I mean, I'm told he's gone. He isn't up here by any chance, is he?'

She accompanied this thrust by a smile of as much friendliness as she could ever summon up for any woman. She and Marjorie Wogan did understand each other, she thought, or at least Marjorie understood her; it was the prerogative of the novelist.

'No,' Marjorie said, and put out her hand toward Lily's. 'My poor dear, I warned you against getting interested in Ricky. He's no good, in the sense that he's concentrated more or less elsewhere. It's not that he doesn't like women, or like humanity or human beings. He likes too many women too much—but for too short a time. His prevailing interest is of—well, of an ideal nature. He has fierce ideas and dies for them every day.'

The coffee came and Lily drank some gratefully. It tasted better to her after the powerful brew at the Bodega.

'I had some conception of what you say,' she contributed finally. 'I am not stupid and we have talked a good deal. He is secretive. He is a clam. And yet I know he is up to something which commands his full, his absorbing attention. But what's the secret? Do you know?'

'No,' Marjorie said slowly. 'I might have an inkling, but it's much too vague. He told you that he was a Spanish Republican, I suppose?'

'So much I know,' Lily said, stabbing out a cigarette, 'for whatever it means, which to me isn't much. Does that mean communist?'

'Not in his case,' Marjorie answered. 'The communists were a minority in the Spanish Republic. Everybody has forgotten that now. Ricky is of a very different breed. He doesn't belong to any party, or at least he never did. I haven't any idea of what he's up to, but it isn't communist. It isn't anarchist either, although there used to be millions of anarchists in Spain who talked the most appealing nonsense about how lovely life would be if we had no police or government or taxes or armies.'

'Goodness,' Lily said, wondering. 'It sounds to me as if—as if I might be, by that definition, an anarchist.'

'You probably are,' Marjorie said. 'Most people are,

really, except that they've got sense enough to see it wouldn't work. But in Spain people don't have that kind of sense. They're all Don Quixote.'

'Do you think he's plotting, conspiring, rushing about in disguise to unavowable meeting places?' Lily asked.

'It's likely,' said Marjorie. 'You see, there's something quite invincible and unchangeable about that sort of romanticism. Event and circumstance have no effect on it whatsoever. It goes on being itself. It dies in harness.'

'The man's unbelievably attractive to me,' Lily said. 'I may as well be frank since you know it or have guessed it anyhow.'

'There was no difficulty,' Marjorie remarked.

'I suppose not. Normally I'm well under control. I've even been called hard by censorious observers, chiefly women. But in this case I'm sure I've made a fool of myself. No matter. I want to tell you something. I saw the Don Quixote. I saw the Don Juan too, except that by habit I call it Don Giovanni. But there's really something else, a living man, and that's what interests me.'

'That's what has interested all of us,' Marjorie said softly, as if to herself. 'What else?'

'All of you?'

'All of us. There have been quite a few, you know. I'm not going to sing Leporello's aria to you, and besides it's well below my range, but the catalogue of the *donne che amò il padron mio* is very considerable.'

The two women were silent for a while, smoking and looking at the slopes beyond the terrace. Finally Lily aroused herself.

'I ought to go,' she said, 'because I know you have things to do. So have I, but they don't matter. I'm confused because I have never before experienced anything like this, so swift and deadly and swiftly gone.'

'Poor sweet,' said Marjorie idly. One could have sworn that she said it with a certain content. 'It is not the bird of every day.'

'What I wonder, among other things,' Lily pursued, 'is of a much more ordinary character than these convenient psychological abstractions, the Don Quixote and the Don Juan and all the rest of it. I wonder, simply, what the man's name is, whence came he and why? I'm a sort of Elsa in this matter, not a Donna this-or-that. I want to know his name, address and serial number, and what he does for a living. The humdrum mediocrity of observed existence would be quite enough for me. I've made my way through it with some success for a girl who was not originally favoured by fortune. I have brains and I know how to study and to learn. You could scarcely distinguish me now from a member of the most privileged and educated classes, could you?'

'No,' said Marjorie truthfully, 'I really couldn't. You are far more cultivated than most of them. But of course one can't tell a damned thing about Americans.'

'Well, let me inform you,' said Lily with emphasis, 'that I've done it all myself. My first husband, who made a great deal of money and lived to enjoy it too, never mastered the first principles of grammar, not to speak of languages or history or literature. He didn't care. He thought I was a whimsical little poppet to want such things and spend time learning them. He was absolutely amazed to discover one day that I really could speak French, without hesitation, and to real, live Frenchmen. I think that altered his entire view of me—that's why he left all of his money to me and disinherited his first wife and their children. He thought I could do more with it.'

'You undoubtedly could,' said Marjorie, slightly baffled just now. 'And have.'

'Now, imagine a woman like me, extremely aware of everything, faced with a man like your Don Ricardo.' It was the first time she had ever called him that, even to herself, and it conveyed (with a faint electrical shock) to herself as well as to Marjorie that she fully knew this to be his Christian name, not his family name, although nobody had told her so. 'He is obviously one of those who have had every conceivable privilege from birth. His education occurred without his knowledge, so to speak. By osmosis? I don't know. His languages, his manners, his manner—all reveal the truth. Besides, he was at Eton, as he told me himself, and I doubt if there are many Spaniards, however rich, who automatically are sent there. Yet I find this man frequenting a dirty little Spanish wineshop and inn somewhere down behind the port, which is indeed the only place where I have seen him outside of your house. He is afraid of coming near my hotel for fear of seeing somebody he knows. I don't know what he's afraid of. But I can't help wondering who he is. It's absurd—it's the Elsa question—but who the devil is he, Marjorie? Can you tell me?'

Marjorie Wogan drew a long, deep breath. She was slow to answer, but she did.

'His family is very old and renowned in Castile,' she said. 'I can tell you so much and really not much more. I could give you the name or names of that family but it would be a breach of confidence, since he chooses to be called Ricardo. And the names don't mean anything much, except in Spain. He was at Eton and at the University of Salamanca, and in the army, and he was a Republican and is now an exile. That's just about all I have to say about him, Lily dear, and I'm sorry. He only came here to lunch that day because I said it was two people only and he'd make a fourth and nobody would be curious about him. I could tell you about how I knew

him in Barcelona fourteen years ago, but it wouldn't help you much and it might be a little painful to me.'

'Castile,' Lily pronounced reflectively. 'He was quite ferocious about Santa Teresa de Avila. I mentioned her name and he said: "She was a woman of my earth." It made me feel that I had no right ever to mention her again.'

Marjorie laughed suddenly.

'How well I know that!' she said. 'It's a Spanish way, especially his.'

'There were all sorts of accusations in it,' Lily pursued. 'You may think I'm exaggerating, but I felt that I was being called not only the American barbarian, which I don't mind, but also a wicked woman of the world, which I do mind. I'm a woman of the world, perhaps, in the sense that I am not a Carmelite nun, but I don't feel that I'm particularly wicked. He reserves Teresa de Avila strictly for himself and those of his earth.'

'There's all that fierce Catholicism in Ricardo, too,' said Marjorie. 'That's another thing . . . I don't know if I should tell you, but his rebellion against the Church, when he became a Republican, was a tremendous storm inside him. It's not the sort of thing northern Protestants could possibly understand. He's *plus royaliste que le roi*, more Catholic than the Pope. But you haven't lived up to now without observing that a great many men, and probably the most interesting amongst them, are a mass of contradictions. Not to speak of women.'

'Oh, women . . . !' Lily dismissed the entire sex. 'I never could be much interested in women. That's why novels bore me. It always seems to me that I already know everything I'm being told about them. Of course I don't mean that your novels bore me, Marjorie . . .'

'Of course not,' she agreed sweetly.

' . . . it's just that revelations in the character of

women don't reveal anything to me. I know men pretty well too, if it comes to that, but I've never encountered anybody quite like your Ricardo.'

'He isn't my Ricardo!' Marjorie protested. 'He supremely isn't my Ricardo! He never was. I caught his attention for a few days once, that's all. And I think he'd been assigned by his superior officers in the Republic, whoever they were, to usher me round, show me things and talk to me. I was treated as a distinguished visitor, and I did write some boring articles about it for some wretched paper. I was, frankly, so taken up with Ricardo himself that I hardly noticed the things he showed me.'

'That I can understand,' Lily said, getting up. 'Oh, for God's sake forgive me—I had no business coming here. But I was at my wits' end. He has simply disappeared and I wondered if you might conceivably know where he's gone. More than that, I suppose, to be perfectly abject about it, I just wanted to talk about him. The man casts a spell. I'm not used to it.'

Marjorie laughed as they walked to the house and through to the hall.

'He was born to be burned at the stake,' she said. 'It's an awful pity when saints and heroes fall into an unsaintly, unheroic age. There simply aren't any stakes to be burned at, any more.'

Lily ruminated. 'He'll find one,' she said. 'I think he'll find one.' Then she squeezed Marjorie's hand. 'It was good of you to talk to me,' she remarked in a warmer tone than usual with her. 'I'll try not to bore you with this any more. Are you going to the . . . ?'

And the last minute or two of their conversation trailed off into social triviality, appointments and engagements.

On the way down to the sea in the taxicab Lily wondered what sense there had been in the impulse that sent

her to Marjorie. Never in her life had she had a confidante: never had she felt the need of one. She had been general in her own army and general staff as well. The whole staggering sequence of events for the past two days, in which she had, as she phrased it, 'made a fool of herself' over a stranger, produced oddities of behaviour in herself such as she could not have believed last week. She had not only confided in Marjorie, but she actually felt a good deal better for having done so. It relieved the oppression that had been crushing downwards inside her own chest. Over and over and over, just the same, the words went through her head: How can this be? How can such things be?

When she got out of the cab in front of the Carlton and paid the man she suddenly remembered Henry McK. Soames. What was she to do? It was late—it was half-past four. Henry would be taking the train in Paris in a few hours, would be at Cannes in the morning.

If she intended to telegraph or telephone in time, it should be done now. She went to the desk and asked if anybody had telephoned for her. Nobody had.

She turned in indecision, walking slowly towards the lift. There was not one person in Cannes, now that Ricardo had apparently gone, who possessed any interest for her. Her acquaintance was considerable, but at the same time, from the point of view to which she had now come, it was negligible. All those old women—male and female! What did they have to say to her or she to them? After all, she liked Henry. She had liked him well enough to be married to him for eight years. Moreover, there was an agreeable dramatic interest in every argument with him, not to say quarrel, because she knew so exactly how to manœuvre him into doing whatever she wanted. In this case, if it was a matter of more money for his awful children, she might derive a positive pleasure

from thwarting them. They had spent their best energies, or so she considered, in thwarting her for a long time.

She decided on the way upstairs that she would let Henry come. She could not stop him in any case, she reflected; she might ask him not to come but he was a free man and France was a free country. If it suited him to visit Cannes he would do so. After all, he had known it much better and longer than she had. Henry was probably playing baccarat at the Cannes Casino before she had stopped washing dishes in Albuquerque. Let him come, let him come.

She went into the big sitting room and looked for messages or mail. Nothing. Nothing. On most days there would have been at least a few invitations, either by note or by telephone. To-day it was her fate to experience a kind of vacuum, a suspension of active current about her. Lassitude, boredom, the infinite doldrums of do-nothingism, had never afflicted her before. She could go and lie on the beach, yes, but idiots would come and talk to her. There was not a book, not one, that could have held her attention now, she thought. She eyed the ivory telephone malevolently, the silent beast that yet held the promise of happiness.

'Madame?'

It was that Françoise again.

'Oh, I don't think I'm going out again,' Lily said. 'I don't know.'

'Madame is not going to the Duchesse de——'

'Is that to-day?'

'It is to-day, from five o'clock to seven. I had put out the gold Paquin.'

'Oh, well, I suppose I may as well go. It will pass the time, even though . . .'

She went into the bedroom and saw the gold Paquin

stretched out on the bed. 'There she was, the elegant and beautiful Mrs. Soames from New York—God knows where she came from, my dear, but does one ever know about Americans?—wending her way, gold-clad and bejewelled and scented, empty as a ravaged tomb. It would be better by far to get a tiny bit drunk on, say, half a bottle of very good and very cold champagne, and then go over to the Casino and gamble. But these, she sighed, these pleasures were not for her; she found drink a deceiver because it was bad for her complexion, and long ago she had made up her mind never to gamble. Steve had not pierced the oil-rich soil of Texas in order to enrich the hangers-on of any Casino in the world, she thought, nor did she, Lily Soames, intend to endanger the peaceful luxury of her existence now or in the future. Still, it might be nice—a little fling—something like a dive into cool deep water or a frisky leap in the air of spring.

'Mrs. Soames,' she said to the gold Paquin dress, 'you must get up now and go to gabble at the house of the Duchesse. And mind your manners.'

CHAPTER FOUR

AT THE end of a bad twenty-four hours Lily was almost glad to see Henry McK. Soames. Not that her heart missed any fraction of a beat, not at all. She never had been romantic about Henry at the very beginning, and this was no beginning. But in the preceding day and night Cannes had afflicted her immeasurably. She had thought of herself as a sort of clothes-horse and from the moment she got into the gold Paquin dress she had behaved like one. She listened to herself talking and loathed it. The company was appalling—voracious old ladies gorging themselves on chocolate cakes of uncounted varieties, French and Italian gentlemen making eyes at her (at the rich Mrs. Soames, the clothes-horse), and woeful little poodles called Nini and Froufrou and Quinquin crawling all over everybody. At that, she liked the Duchesse's poodles better than her guests, since they had the grace not to speak.

Dinner was worse—at the Casino, *grande toilette*, something she had totally forgotten: it rose to bite her at the Duchesse's house that afternoon. All French. Floor show. Champagne. Gambling afterwards which, since she did not participate, seemed to her the peak of dullness. She could not make her escape until midnight and her bed had never seemed so good. Nobody—nobody—had telephoned. Consequently it was with some anticipation

of at least human intercourse that she answered Henry's call at half-past ten the next morning.

'Henry!' she said gaily. 'You are *matinal*, as usual! I'm not out of bed yet. Did you have a good journey? . . . Well, I'm visible at about noon. Do you want to take me to lunch? . . . Come up here at noon or a little bit afterwards and we can have a talk. I'll give you a cocktail or some sherry or some tomato juice or whatever you want and then we can go out somewhere. . . . Oh, yes, I'm all right, I'm always all right. I find that Cannes stinks slightly, but so does everything else . . . Noon then, or noon-ish. Good-bye.'

She even took a good deal of care about her dressing, a little more than usual. Henry liked the chic-simple, the little nothing that cost a fortune, and she could manage that very well from her existing resources. (Lily always travelled with three trunks as well as numerous cases, boxes and bags; she was therefore a slave to ships and trains, but since she disliked the risk which she felt still inhered in aeroplanes this did not trouble her.) Even Françoise caught the intimation that a monsieur of special importance was coming, and developed an assiduity of suggestion which Lily found slightly repellent.

'That ought to be enough,' she said to the automaton. 'The dress doesn't need flowers or pins or laces. It's all right as it is. And the gentleman who is coming is nothing special, Françoise. He's only somebody I married once.'

'Oh, Madame!' Françoise giggled, as if a witticism had cracked in her nose. 'Oh, Madame!'

Lily stood by the balcony and looked out at the monotonous beauty of the September sea. Sunny day after sunny day, and tideless water endlessly rippling: where was that accursed Spaniard? Her whole body shamelessly demanded the Spaniard, perhaps because she knew that

Henry was on his way upstairs. She was sheathed in a white dress and knew that she could never have looked better. She wore not a single jewel except the vast diamond he once had given her for her finger. She turned at the sound of the bell, and there he was.

‘Henry!’

She was across the room in an instant, stretching out both hands.

‘How well you look!’ she said.

And indeed he did. He was about ten years older than she, but had also benefited by every advantage known to the applied sciences of the privileged. He was tall, rectangular, handsome in a conventional way, like an Episcopalian church in a prosperous suburb. He had no paunch and not much grey in his very abundant brown hair. He was ‘fit’—Henry always ‘kept fit’—and his steady blue eyes were gentle when they looked at her. A handsome man, she thought suddenly. I had really almost forgotten what a handsome man he was!

‘My dear!’ he said, taking her two hands. There was a poised instant of time in which they might have kissed, but it passed. She turned and walked toward the balcony.

‘Let’s sit here where we can look at that body of water,’ she said. ‘I’m getting tired of it, but if you’ve just arrived you may find it pretty. Do you want something to drink?’

‘I could manage a martini,’ he said, ‘chiefly because I didn’t sleep well on that train and I probably need it. Shall I make it?’

He saw the tray beside the open French windows and went toward it.

‘Please do,’ she said. ‘I’ll have one too, for the occasion. That ought to show you how I value your visit!’

‘It does,’ he said, working at the mixture. ‘I’ve never known you to have a martini before lunch. But you’re

looking so beautiful that I don't think you have them often.'

'I don't,' she said tranquilly. 'I'm the same disciplined soldier you knew. I take exercises. Massage. I watch what I eat. I weigh myself and look in the mirror for crow's-feet.'

'You've never found any,' he stated, turning around with the drink in the shaker.

'No, but they'll come,' she said. 'I don't know whether I'll mind or not. I'm just staving off the day.'

'Even if they do come,' he said, handing her the cocktail he had poured, 'you'll still be beautiful.'

'How kind ex-husbands are!' she said lightly, trying to ignore the fact that he had actually caused her a moment of pleasure. 'Do you know, Henry, you're the only ex-husband I've ever had? Lots of women have several.'

'Several women have lots,' he said. 'Good Lord, remember old Abby Blackthorne in London? I think she must have six or seven ex-husbands still living.'

'She counts them over every one apart,' Lily murmured. Then: 'Henry, my dear, do tell me what you've come to see me about. It's better to talk now than at lunch. Especially if it's disagreeable, let's get it over.'

He reddened and twirled his glass. There was more of the cocktail in the shaker and he poured it out for both of them.

'To tell you the truth, I just wanted to see you,' he said. 'Believe me, that's simple and straight. In addition .

'Yes?'

'In addition, there is the suggestion, made by, well, lawyers, and others, that conceivably you might be willing to cut down the scale of your alimony when—or if—you knew the general, well, the general state of affairs, the general situation.'

He was acutely embarrassed and she had had an impulse to laugh, which she suppressed. How well she had foreseen!

'Mind you, Lily,' he said, 'this could very well have been done in writing. It could even have been done between lawyers, without any communication between us. But I truly did want to see you again. Just to see you.'

'That's nice of you, Henry,' she said. 'What's the rub about money?'

'It's just—well,' he blurted out, 'you don't really need it, you know you don't!'

'True,' she said. 'What has that to do with it?'

'The children do,' he said. 'Hank has had a run of bad luck, really bad luck with investments and expenses and taxes and children and all. He needs help. And Liza—well, Liza always needs money.'

'I should think she might,' said Lily with a touch of asperity; she meant, and he understood her to mean, that Liza without money would be something less than zero, even in those intellectual circles which she was understood to frequent.

'I know you and the children never did hit it off,' he said uncomfortably. 'It wasn't my fault. I tried.'

'They didn't,' said Lily. 'And anyhow, Henry, what have Hank and Liza to do with me? You have a large income.'

He made a faint groaning noise.

'It's pretty big on paper,' he admitted after a pause. 'I don't have to tell you how it dwindles. You must know. You've always been a good business woman. I suppose you know to the penny what the income tax is on your income, and mine, and everybody else's. I have big expenses.'

'They could be reduced,' she said briskly. 'How many horses do you keep, for instance? How many cars?'

How many people work for you, just to keep you going? If your children need money I think you should find it for them. You may say that I don't need what you pay me, or that I don't need all of it—and perhaps that might be true—but on the other hand it was agreed by the lawyers that this was a just and equitable settlement. I didn't hold you up. In fact I never argued the point. I took what I was told I ought to have. It seems to me that that settled it for good.'

'Let's drop it,' he said. 'Let's just have lunch and talk about the weather. I thought perhaps you might be willing to shave off a bit, say ten thousand a year, for the sake of the children who are, believe me, in need of it. It would be a great convenience to me. However, I suppose I can find it in some other way, as you say.'

He looked embarrassed and in fact miserable. It occurred to her that she had been right so far: he had indeed come to ask her for money for his children (his own money, of course). But there must be something else. He had come for some other reason as well; otherwise he would not be so willing to drop the subject and would not exhibit such signs of pain.

'Poor, old Henry!' she said. 'Something's wrong. How'd you happen to be in Paris, anyhow? You didn't come over just for this?'

'Oh, no,' he said. 'I had business there. I thought I'd come down here while I had the chance.'

He got up and made another cocktail, without protest from her. This was, she reflected, something of a binge for both of them.

'I wanted to see you,' he said again, with that same reddening of the face. 'I haven't really got used to the idea that we're divorced.'

'It's been two years since I took that sweet little pilgrimage to Reno,' she said. 'That's quite a while ago.'

'It's never come to be real, to me, if you know what I mean,' he said.

Under her steady scrutiny he seemed more than ever embarrassed. Why, she thought, bless the man, he's like a youth paying court! And it seemed to her that she knew now why he had come.

'Oh, come along now, Henry,' she said, getting up. 'We're adults. We must acknowledge the existence of what is. And anyhow it's time for lunch. I never eat anything to speak of in the morning, so I get quite peckish by one o'clock. I'll be out in a moment.'

While she was gone he moved about the room restlessly, looking at this and that, picking up a little Persian paper knife he had once given her, glancing at the photographs on her desk. A hotel room, he reflected—that was her home, that was what she always had wanted. A big house bored her, a little house would have taken too much of her own time. She did not like to plan a garden and watch it grow. So many of the things that mattered to him and his mind were blankly indifferent to her that he sometimes wondered how and why they ever had married. And yet, Oh, Lord! how attractive she was to him, how his pulses stirred at the movement of her slim body in the clinging white dress! Was she a 'bitch', as his daughter Liza had so flatly declared in that last conversation? He would never know. She was not an 'adventuress' in any known variety of that old-fashioned word, nor was she unduly extravagant according to the standards of the world in which she lived. She liked money and clung to it. A great deal of what she had belonged to her by her first husband's will, and when he remembered what he had learned of that will and the ensuing contest over it he was ill at ease. On this point alone she had seemed singularly heartless, unwilling to yield anything at all to the other widow, the far-off first wife

of the Texas oil man, and sustained in law because all of the wealth had come after Steve's second marriage. Henry could only suppose that some personal reason, some retroactive jealousy or possessive sense about Steve, had occasioned this behaviour, and he had surreptitiously been providing a small income for the other widow for years, even now, even after his own divorce, because by doing so he somehow rectified an error in Lily which he did not like to contemplate. He had never told her, nor would he tell her now. It would not alter in the least her determination to keep what she had. He saw that, and according to his own estimate of the matter he saw everything else—everything his angry daughter could adduce—except that his interpretation of the facts was his own. He was not, as his daughter Liza believed him to be, a blind dupe. It was Liza herself who was blinded by a dislike amounting almost to hatred. What could she know or understand of Lily's enchantment for him?

'Where are we going to lunch?' he asked when she came in. 'At the Casino?'

'As you like,' she said. She was gleaming and glowing: no addition to her accoutrements had been made except a tiny white hat, some gloves and a bag, but she diffused radiance. He knew her age but she looked, beyond a doubt, a whole decade younger than that delusive tally of years.

'I forgot to ask you where you were staying,' she went on. 'Here, by any chance?'

'No, out at the Marsdens' house,' he answered, a little embarrassed again because he knew his Marsden cousins had never been friends of hers. 'It was not easy to refuse. Do you ever see them?'

'Not if I can help it,' she said. 'Sometimes, at parties . . . I have an impulse to take you to a queer little Spanish place down by the port, Henry, but I don't think

you'd like it. At least not in the daytime. If you stay a while I may take you there for dinner one day.'

'I came to see you,' he said, as they went down in the lift. 'I must go back to Paris in a day or so. I thought I might even go to-morrow.'

Correct, correct and handsome he was, everything most suitable and appealing, so that his wife should be an enviable woman, Lily thought, but never really had been—not with all those relatives controlling their distaste, and Henry trying to 'make the best' of everything, and somewhere in all of it a total lack of imagination or even of space for imagination: the horizons ever close and small. What would he think, she wondered, if he knew what she had now in her handbag—the note Françoise had just now given her? It was only a pencilled scrawl and had been delivered by hand, by some person unknown, but it said: 'My dear, I have had to go away but I am coming back in about three days I think and shall telephone you at once. Love. Ricardo.' Just the sight of that scrawl had lifted her spirits as Henry had never been able to do in their entire eight years of marriage.

'The Ambassadeurs it is!' she said with unreasonable gaiety. 'If the great public of the great world of Cannes wishes to see the divorced Soames couple lunching together, let them do so.'

'Do you mind being—being seen there?' he asked.

'Why should I? I go there often. There's nothing more *convenable* in the world than your own appearance, Henry, and if the old women want to make up a story about us, I don't mind.'

She wanted to talk about Ricardo. It was all because of that scribble she had put into her handbag, and of which she was conscious even while she chattered of something else. It was not a subject for Henry; she knew it was not. She felt certain that he had come to Cannes,

as he said, to see her. The pretext about money for his children could only be a pretext, in a man of his wealth and natural generosity. He came in some sense for love or for the echo of love, and by processes unknown to her this made the idea of Ricardo dominate her being while they sat and ate oysters. At last she allowed it to break through.

'There is one way in which I might give up all my alimony, Henry,' she said. The words surprised even her; she had not chosen or pronounced them, it seemed, and they came from an inner depth. 'That is, by marrying again.'

He stared with his hands flat on the table and his smooth, weathered face grew a shade or two lighter.

'Are you thinking of any such thing?' he asked.

'Not precisely,' she answered. And, she reflected as she spoke, this was indeed true. She had never thought of it before and she was revealing something not only to him but to herself. 'But I think it is not impossible.'

'Is there—somebody?'

'Yes,' she said deliberately, spacing out the words. 'There is. There most assuredly is.'

He stopped eating and crumbled his bread, an absent look in his eyes.

'I am treating you as a friend in telling you this,' she went on. 'The idea has never been mentioned—indeed, it has not seriously crossed my mind. I never intended to marry again. But when I consider the conditions under which I might give up the allowance paid me under our divorce, I have to tell you the truth, which is that it might happen.'

'I am very sorry, Lily,' he said at last. 'I am. I had hoped . . .'

She looked at him in sharp surprise.

'You had hoped . . .?' she echoed. 'Really? Now

that's brave of you, Henry. The triumph of hope over experience? The man who has greatly disturbed me, greatly, is not an ideal husband. I think perhaps you are. What a pity! He is—how shall I say?—somebody with a bee in his bonnet.'

'Aside from anything else,' he said, looking out of the great glass windows toward the sea, 'I hope you're not getting into any, well, any imprudence, anything that will bring harm to you.'

'I can take pretty good care of myself,' she stated with confidence. 'That fact could hardly be denied. Ask Liza. She thinks I take much too good care of myself.'

'But just the same, a man with a bee in his bonnet . . .'

'Oh, he isn't crazy,' she broke in. 'Not at all. Just obsessed.'

'Worse,' he said.

'Maybe. But the effect upon me is indescribable. I also become obsessed.'

'My dear Lily,' he said heavily, 'I had no idea. This is bad.'

'Bad enough,' she admitted. 'I thought I had survived any and all storms of that nature. Not at all. This is the worst. And although I have never thought of re-marrying, I was compelled to tell you just now that it might happen, and I'm awakening to the possibility myself.'

'Why marry?' he asked with a wintry and disillusioned smile twisting his otherwise handsome face.

'I don't know,' she confessed. 'Maybe because I'm a marrying woman. Maybe because the notion of legalizing a relationship is bred into us, that is, women or most women, in America. Maybe we all want to be respectable.'

'It's been many a long year now,' Henry said, 'since marriage brought respectability to anybody.'

'I know. It's no longer a protection of any kind. But there's a sort of hangover from the old days in all of us.'

He crumbled his bread. He ate very little. All his pleasure in their lunch *d deux* on the sunny September day had vanished. They finished, had coffee and walked back to the hotel.

'I am going back to-morrow,' he said, 'perhaps by air. I'll find out. Your news has rather upset me, I must say. I hope you'll be careful.'

'It isn't news, Henry,' she said softly. 'It's just an idea. It may come to nothing.'

'You aren't exactly whimsical, you know,' he said.

A notion arose: it might give Henry pleasure and it would certainly annoy those cousins of his whom she disliked.

'Would the Marsdens let you come in to Cannes to dine with me to-night?' she asked. 'I could take you to the Spanish place.'

'What can they do to stop me?' he asked. Then, his face clouding: 'No, Lily, I won't. I won't. Let's part here. I'll be at the Ritz in Paris for another couple of weeks, I think.'

It was awkward. She extended her hand in a way which made it possible to kiss it, but Henry did not kiss hands: he thought it 'foreign'. He could not very well kiss her face without overcoming some barrier which was just as established as if it had been visible. He pressed her hand and went away.

CHAPTER FIVE

ONCE THE phantom of marriage had shaped itself in Lily's mind, had clothed itself in words actually pronounced, it grew steadily more real. It floated in through the blue gauze at the balcony window and took form in the bunch of stephanotis on the table. She saw it everywhere. And how absurd it was, too, she knew full well. In the first place, she did not know the man's name. She might imagine a flood of Castilian vocables to suit his impersonation (the impersonation of the personification of a *persona*, she thought, an archetype) but in sober truth he might be named Schultz for all she knew. The fiction that he was called Ricardo had never deceived her. But Schultz or Gomez or Montalba de Montemayor, whatever it might be, the name could not affect her wish—it was not yet will, only wish—to annex it, to take it and him into permanent custody. She was in a way like a lion-tamer with no lion to tame, and the wisdom of providence had thrown a lion in her path. Quite aside from human female love, about which she considered herself less vulnerable than most, she hungered and thirsted after conquest. The man obsessed her; he was wild; she would tame him. And of all the ways known for the domestication of the wild, marriage has in Western Christian societies been given the uncontested palm for centuries past.

Lily was ruthlessly frank with herself. Her exceptional

intelligence enabled her to be so. Feathery little self-deceptions, downy couches of illusion and flattery, were contemptible in her eyes because they belonged to the weak, whereas she was strong. Strong she was, indeed—strong enough to look resolutely for wrinkles, as she had truthfully told Henry, and, what is more, to find them, although she had not contradicted his assertion to the contrary. Her looking glass was a surgical instrument. She had an equally piercing eye and cool head when it came to questions of character. She knew that in her own case there was also an impersonation of the personification of the *persona*—that is, she became steadily more what she was in proportion as social credit affirmed it. She had always been Lily, but that oil which gushed so extravagantly from Steve's Texas acres had enabled her to personify herself, as, in due course, Henry's complement of established position had allowed her to make the personification permanent (to coin it out statutorily, so to speak) and thus release her for an impersonation of it all through the rest of her life. So innumerable others, but always the definite and exceptional ones, impersonated themselves, as Lily's shrewdness had long since noted. Very well, then: I impersonate myself. And what does myself do, faced at the age of forty with an untamed lion? Myself tames lion. Nothing else could be expected of the beautiful and rich Mrs. Soames of New York ('God knows where she came from') who had never yet taken no for an answer on anything important. Thus the social credit, the general estimate, comes in the end to precisely the same as the inner logic—this is what I *would* do and therefore this is what I *will* do.

But Lily had not yet, during the twenty-four hours after Henry's farewell, reached the point of using the word *will*. It was forming its ominous bulletlike form in the shadows of her mind but it had not yet gone off. She

distrusted the powerful physical attraction Ricardo exercised over her—that, as she knew from the experience of others, could be death and damnation to any woman. She distrusted the tendency toward, as she called it, 'marriageability' amongst American women, their desire to get married, no matter how many times in order to regularize relationships which needed no such spurious silver-gilt and derived no embellishment from it. According to Lily's resolute clarity in such matters, five marriages were precisely the same as five affairs, and the unnecessary pieces of paper thus accumulated were in the category of the downy couches, fit only for the weak. She further distrusted the romanticism of foreign names and foreign places, the kind of thing that makes American women marry a succession of improbabilities bearing geographical titles, for in such, she held, there was an abysmal silliness. In this respect she even rather wished that Ricardo's name might be Schultz, so that the undoubted romanticism of his entity might be diminished. Yet here, too, she was well aware of reality: whatever his name might be, it certainly wasn't Schultz, and it was much more likely to be Montalba de Montemayor. In her early years she might have liked such frippery—she had once toyed with the idea of marrying a duke merely for the pleasure of being a duchess, but her good brain informed her that the pleasure would be extremely transitory and then she would be left with a useless duke on her blameless hands for ever—but now all such notions had long since gone to the rubbish heap. Fortified by Steve's money, she could be called Mrs. Stinking Slush and it would not make the slightest difference. It was as good a name as any.

Her thought of marriage, as she knew mercilessly well, came from a quite ordinary desire to make permanent that which had been (alone in her life's experience) so

extremely transitory and inexplicable. Even Ricardo's rebellion against permanence, as shown in some remarks he made about the word *permanecer*, may in themselves have suggested her desire for it, but she knew now that it existed. She must beware of it. Lily was careful, Lily was strong, and now was no time to break the habits of a lifetime. She would go slow, as slow as possible, but during these long hours when the idea was swarming in upon her so strongly, it seemed to her that there must be reason and truth in it. For without the relative permanence of marriage she could never hope to hold this man for long, if at all, and without the authority of marriage she could make no slightest beginning toward chasing the bees out of his bonnet, whatever those bees might be. They were Don Quixote's bees, she thought, and Don Juan was perhaps her only ally in expelling them.

Lily McGarrity as was, Lily from Albuquerque, she told herself cruelly, are you romantic? You, of all people, commander and general staff in one, traversing life as if on a white horse, whence come these tears? For, among other phenomena of the day, she actually wept.

CHAPTER SIX.

THEN HE came back. On the second afternoon at five o'clock he telephoned, saying only: 'Lily, I'm back. Can you dine with me at our Spanish place?'

She said: 'Yes. Where have you been?'

'No matter. Is half-past seven too early? Shall I come to the front of your hotel with a taxicab?'

'That's all right. At least it'll do. I'll arrange.'

How little he cares, she thought after she had replaced the receiver, whether I had six engagements for to-night or none at all. It would not have been possible to mention such a thing. He obviously did not like to talk on the telephone and might simply have dropped the idea if she had made difficulties. Now she was obliged to cancel a dinner engagement of some standing and hope that her defection would not be resented. The machine Françoise could do it for her, of course, but the awkwardness remained. She could not long continue to shift her engagements about, cancel them at the last moment and pretend illnesses unknown to her and denied by her appearance. She would be relegated to an area known to her as the dog-house, in which no really desirable invitations would come her way often, but—with a sudden lift of gaiety—she decided the dog-house might be a good dwelling place if Ricardo were there with her, stony face and three arrows of white hair and iron arms.

While she put Françoise to the task of cancelling the

engagements (two before dinner as well as dinner itself) she sat just inside her balcony and read a book with determined attention. She was not going to let herself go. Daydreams were useless, the evening would come, she had two hours and a half and she would not spend them on cobwebs. The book passed before her eyes as if it were itself a dream. She read every word that came under her eyes and afterwards could not remember one. At six o'clock she got up, went into the bedroom and began a long, thoughtful process of bathing and dressing. He could hardly be aware of anything about her clothes in detail, she supposed, but the general impression was what mattered, and she could take care of the detail herself so long as he responded, as he had done before, with a sense of the exquisite effect. Twice she changed everything from head to toe, but at last she thought she had done well. Then she went out into the sitting room and ordered a small bottle of champagne, from which she drank one glass. Rigid though her rules might be, this was one time when they could be broken. She left the rest of the champagne to Françoise, went downstairs and stood on the Croisette opposite the hotel. In about two minutes his taxicab drew up at the kerb and she got in swiftly; it was not dark and she knew he did not want to be seen there.

'Lily!'

'Ricardo!'

That was in fact all they said while the grinning taxi driver wheeled about and drove them back to the port area and the Malagueña. It seemed to be a Spanish driver: at least Ricardo spoke to him in Spanish when he paid him.

The Bodega Malagueña was as before, and the fat woman in the shawl, now all smiles and bows, gave them the same table under the arcade beside the patio. Ricardo ordered the meal.

'You have been gone forever,' Lily said.

'Did it seem so? It was not.'

'I did not know you were going. I expected you to call on that day—how many days ago?'

'Only three. I had work to do. Very serious work. I was away from this place and only came back this afternoon.'

His face sealed up when he spoke of such things. She had noticed it before.

'Your secrets are your own, of course,' she said. 'I was—what?—well, disappointed.'

'I left a note for you. Didn't they bring it?'

She wondered who 'they' were and dared not ask.

'I got it a day later,' she said. 'But for twenty-four hours I wondered.'

'Poor little Lily,' he said with tenderness, pressing her hand. 'I told you I was not for you. This work—it takes me away very suddenly and I don't know when it brings me back. Sometime I might not come back.'

'Don't say it,' she said, her eyes widening. (She felt them grow wider but did not in fact do it deliberately—it was second nature which had become nature.)

'It's true,' he told her. 'I have to tell you at least this much. Do you love me?'

Oddly enough he had never asked her this before.

'Yes, I believe I do,' she said.

'Then don't ask me any more about it,' he said, leaning forward to look at her earnestly. 'It's beyond me. I don't control it. I come and I go. Let it be like that.'

She drew back and reached for her cigarette case. He lighted the cigarette for her and waited for her to speak.

'You don't give much, do you?' she asked. Her impulse was one of shame or anger, she could hardly tell which, and she was trying to keep it down. 'In fact, I don't even know your real name.'

'My name is Ricardo,' he said very gently.

'I know,' she said. 'Mine's Lily.'

'I am very sorry,' he said after a pause. 'It must seem awful to you. There is so little I can tell. Can't we forget it? We have one thing very great. There is another thing, involving other people, not mine to tell. You surely do understand how this could be. Pigeon, dove . . .'

She had tears of exasperation in her eyes.

'I am really neither a pigeon nor a dove, Ricardo,' she said as quietly as she could manage. 'That is the trouble. However, I'll try. Your terms are difficult. For example, I've never in my life done what I did—but no matter. I'll find some other subject. For example, my former husband has just visited Cannes.'

The food came and he was silent until the fat woman in the shawl went away.

'Your former husband was here,' he asked, 'while I was away?'

'He was. I had lunch with him.'

'May I ask,' he inquired rather loftily, 'who it is?'

'His name is Soames, since that is my name. I have no secrets, you see.'

'He is your—divorced husband, then?'

'Certainly.'

Ricardo seemed a little absent, removed from the small table and the bottle of Alella.

'I did not know you were divorced,' he said at last. 'I had some notion that you were a widow. I do not know why.'

'I thought I had told you.'

'Is it customary in America,' he asked, 'for divorced persons to have lunch together?'

She had regained possession of herself and this produced a rustle of genuine laughter.

'I think it depends entirely on the persons,' she said. 'After all, I was married to Henry for eight years. He's not a stranger. He wanted to talk to me, and lunch at the Casino seemed a good arrangement.'

Ricardo devoted himself to his food in gloomy concentration.

'We do not have similar customs in Spain,' he remarked in due course. 'Perhaps that is why I do not understand them.'

'But you're a man of the world,' she protested. 'You know at least what it's like.'

He smiled at her suddenly, as if recalled to some consciousness he had abandoned for the previous moment.

'Of course I know about divorce,' he said, 'and I've known many divorced persons in England and France. I just didn't know you were divorced.'

His smile broadened, and he said with a resumption of the earlier tenderness, 'Lily, I must tell you the truth. I never thought of divorce and I did not think you were a widow, either. I thought you were married, simply married.'

She stared at him in unaffected surprise.

'If I had been . . .' she began, and then dropped it. 'I see,' she said. 'Does—does what we did, with all its suddenness and completeness, occur usually with married women?'

'It has been known,' he replied.

She wanted to laugh but refrained because the incomprehension was too great between them. She perceived quite clearly that the thought of her being divorced had been a shock to him, whereas if she had been 'married, simply married', their thunderous encounter would have been a matter of course. It was a wry and unexpected realization.

'I wish I could say precisely what I mean,' she com-

plained. 'I don't find the words. In the first place, I am not at all a woman who can be carried off at first meeting. It never happened to me before.'

His grave, dark glance was directed to her with serious attention; he might almost have been making a bow.

'Moreover, if I had been married, simply married, as you call it, this couldn't have happened. Believe me. I have been married twice and I was faithful to both husbands. I know many women, perhaps even most women, are not, but I was. It is perhaps respect for contract, for the bargain, for the pledged word. My stepdaughter says I'm merely careful. Whatever it is, that's the way it is.'

Ricardo seemed more puzzled than anything else by now, and his gravity was close to gloom.

'All these ideas are a little unfamiliar,' he said, 'perhaps not intellectually, but by custom, habit, the experiences of life. We do not have these easy marriages and divorces. With us, marriage is a sacrament. No matter how enlightened we may become later on in life we still, that is we Spaniards, regard it as such, by nature and instinct.'

She was baffled too.

'But then,' she asked, 'if marriage is a sacrament, what is adultery?'

'It is only a sin,' he said gravely. 'The flesh is weak. Sins can be forgiven.'

'If I understand at all,' she resumed, choosing her words with care, 'divorce somehow shocks you but adultery does not?'

'Perhaps it might be so expressed,' he said, 'although I don't think I'm easily shocked at anything. It's only that I didn't *know* you were divorced—I thought you were married. It's not a general statement. It's a particular surprise.'

She tried to take this in and decided that the argument

must be abandoned, since the particular surprise clearly derived from a deeper source, a general view of life and human relationships inaccessible to her just now. She might, upon time and reflection, be able to reason it out, but at the present moment she felt that it presented a danger.

‘Do we have to debate, Ricardo?’ she asked softly. ‘After all, it doesn’t matter to us, does it? Aren’t we still where we were?’

She touched his hand and he smiled.

‘Yes, Lily, we are still where we were,’ he said. ‘It seems that we have much to find out about each other, but we’re still here and you are lovely.’

When the meal and the dance were over he asked her if she did not want to see his quarters.

‘I live here, you know,’ he said, ‘at least when I am here. I thought you had perhaps guessed.’

‘I did guess,’ she said, ‘but when I came to ask nobody would tell me.’

‘They are discreet,’ he said, taking her arm, ‘they are all friends here.’

He led her into the dark corner of the patio opposite the kitchens. A dimly lighted staircase twisted around three landings before it took them to the balcony and his room—opened without a key. He took the key from his pocket and locked it after them.

It was a curiously pleasant room, notably clean, with lamps, pictures and books which could never have been the property of the establishment. There was a dim alcove where Lily could see an enormous bed. There was a long sofa in front of the fireplace.

‘Is it too hot for a fire?’ he asked.

‘A little fire,’ she said, ‘let’s have a little, and what a nice room!’

‘I’ve kept it for years,’ he said. ‘All the stuff’s mine, of

course. I put in those bookshelves, too. It's a *pied-à-terre*. The people of the house are safe, sound people and they keep the place in order for me, too.'

He lit the fire and produced some Spanish brandy from a cupboard. Then he put it down on the table and took her in his arms.

It was hours later when he led Lily down the stairs and through the silent streets to the sea front. He must have made his arrangements in advance, for where the street turned into the port the same Spanish taxi driver was waiting to drive them to the hotel.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NEXT four days were a joy to Lily. Ricardo's bliss was perhaps mitigated by those mysterious matters of which he refused to speak. Certainly at times his abstraction was apparent to her, but she let it pass without comment. For the most part she delighted in his extraordinary prowess as a lover, his charm of company when he was not a lover, his eagle face and white-arrowed hair, his whole quixotic appearance, the grave melodies of his un-English voice. She was quite content to see nobody else in Cannes so long as the room at the Malagueña was hers every night. It crossed her mind, once or twice, that her behaviour might be observed, but on the whole the world she knew had no opportunity (and no desire) to observe what went on at the Malagueña.

One day Ricardo walked home with her on the Croisette after lunch. He did not do so often; her hotel was a source of uneasiness. He did not actually go to the door of the hotel with her, but stood across the street and took her hand. They were to meet again in a few hours.

'*Cabrón!*' he said with violence, dropping her hand.

'What's the matter?'

'That man! Did he see me?'

She gazed across the street in bewilderment. There were several men in sight, all going in or out of the hotel or walking in the street without any sign of interest in Ricardo.

'I don't know which one you mean,' she said. 'Anyhow, nobody's looking at us.'

'There,' he said. 'He just left the hotel. It is De Cisneros. I think he saw me.'

'What's the difference?' she asked.

'He is an enemy,' Ricardo said sombrely. 'He is the worst kind of enemy because he was once a friend. I have known him all my life.'

'He can't harm you, can he?' Lily asked, wondering at his intensity.

'He could, indeed he could,' Ricardo asserted. 'He knows so much. Cisneros is an able fellow.' 'He is that yellow-skinned one, something of a fop about clothing. You can hardly see him now, he walks so fast. He is a—what do you call?—a key person, a person of central importance, in their embassy in Paris. I do not like to see him here.'

'Don't worry, dear,' she said airily, 'you're probably *imagining things again*. I shall be here at eight o'clock this evening.'

'Couldn't we meet a little lower down the Croisette, away from this infernal hotel?' he asked. 'Cisneros makes me nervous.'

'Of course, you fussbudget,' she said. 'I'll walk along in the direction of the port at eight o'clock. You can pick me up wherever you choose. Good-bye, Rico dear. Thanks for lunch.'

She would perhaps have attached little importance to the incident if it had not been for the fact that she met Cisneros that same afternoon. An Englishman living in the hotel had a cocktail party and amongst the familiar faces there was one strange one: a yellow-skinned, gloomy-eyed Spaniard who was introduced as Conde de Cisneros. She regarded him with some apprehension because it was quite clear, in some inexplicable way, that he knew her or knew about her. It was implicit in his look, in the way he bowed, in the tone of his voice.

'I hope you are enjoying yourself in Cannes,' he said—a harmless and indeed meaningless remark, but he gave it some sort of intonation that puzzled her. She escaped from him as soon as she could, which was easy enough in that horde, and resolved firmly that she would not tell Ricardo of the episode. He was jumpy enough anyhow; the addition of any other reason for nervousness was far from necessary. If it lay in her power to avoid seeing Cisneros she would do so, and in the meantime she would neither think of him nor speak of him.

It was Lily's fortune that she could do things of this kind—expel from her mind whatever she thought it wise to forget. She was able to erase De Cisneros from her consciousness for some hours—that is, until Ricardo, upstairs in his own room in the Malagueña, striding the floor with a glass of Fundador in his hand, mentioned the man's name.

'That fellow Cisneros,' he said abruptly, switching from some talk they had had of characteristics compared between French and Spanish poetry, 'he's an apparition. The last man I wanted to see. He knows me from my birth, he knows my brothers, my mother, my whole family, and you can well imagine, since he's king-pin at *their* embassy, that he's in favour of everything I detest. He wasn't a bad fellow in school, that is the preparatory school, the baby school I went to before I was at Eton. He was much worse at Salamanca, devoted to all the ancient privileges of an aristocracy to which he only partly belongs, really, since—to tell the plain truth—his mother's family built ships at Bilbao and it's extremely doubtful if his father was literally and precisely a Cisneros. *Enfin*, you understand, there are secrets in families, but Luis de Cisneros has, in my opinion, only the most shadowy claim to the Castilian noble tradition of which he is so proud. Some malicious old women in Madrid

have even suggested that his true father was a certain Portuguese horse-dealer much in favour with those who frequented the races at that time. He looks slightly Portuguese, I must say, and also even slightly like a horse. His mother the Condesa was passionate about the races, which she could afford to be because she had one of the great Bilbao fortunes to legitimize the weakness. I don't trifle with scandal as a rule, but I think Luis de Cisneros has such a reverence for the aristocracy that he can't possibly be a member of it, so maybe the stories are true.'

He paused to draw breath. Lily looked up at him with amusement not at all pure—amusement, certainly, but some alarm and some bewilderment too.

'How you talk!' she said. 'Whatever he is, he has aroused you. How can he damage you in any way?'

'Oh, my plans, my projects, my ideas, my dreams, all are perfectly well known to him,' Ricardo said, leaning gauntly against the fireplace. 'Luis is intelligent. I've also heard that he directs a considerable intelligence service of his own, and I know that he is fanaticism itself when it comes to the maintenance of that regime that he likes. He could damage me a great deal. He would not hesitate to kill me or to order me killed if he thought it necessary.'

Lily shuddered. It had a chilly sound of the grim and real.

'A friend of your family?' she said faintly.

'What difference does that make?' he asked. 'Most of my family agree with him, if it comes to that. We were in school together. What of it? He believes in one thing and I believe in another. They are inimical and mutually exclusive things.'

'I don't care what anybody believes in,' Lily stated with a rally of courage. 'Nothing could justify what you say—that is, killing for such a belief.'

Ricardo stared down at her.

'Men have killed for their beliefs, and died for them

too, since the beginning of time,' he said. 'Don't you know that?'

'I don't see what difference it makes what I know, historically speaking,' she answered. 'I still think it's wrong for one lifelong friend to kill another. Strangers, perhaps . . .'

'The two things have no relation but I doubt if I can ever make you see that they haven't,' he told her. 'You are my pigeon. That's enough.'

'Pigeon, is it?'

With all her cool disciplines, Lily found it impossible not to think of Cisneros in the next two days because he was obviously living in her hotel and she could not avoid seeing him from time to time. He gave her a ceremonious bow each time, and she nodded as distantly as possible, with a stir of irritation that this should be necessary.

Then Ricardo disappeared again and it no longer seemed to matter whether Cisneros was in Cannes or not. When she did think of it, a day or so later, it was to wonder where he had gone, for now she had ceased to encounter him in the hall or on the terrace. No doubt he had returned to his work in Paris.

For this second disappearance Ricardo prepared her a little. She felt that she had made great advances; he told her he was going. He did not tell her much more than that, but it was far better than nothing. On the night before his journey, as they sat in his quarters at the Malagueña, just as he was about to take her back to the hotel, he said it.

'Lily, my dearest,' he said, 'I'm going away again tomorrow for a very short time. Three days, perhaps, four days. I don't know exactly except that I know it can't take long.'

'Oh, darling,' she said reproachfully. 'Must you?'

'I must.'

She stroked the hard line of his jaw.

'You probably don't realize what it was like when I thought you were lost, had simply vanished,' she said. 'I could think of nothing else. Whatever you are doing and wherever you are going you will be busy, and you won't think of me except perhaps from time to time. Whereas I shall just be here, waiting for you to come back. Anyhow this time I know you *are* going and *will* come back. That's the difference, and it's enormous, Rico dear.'

Then he was gone and five blank days followed during which Lily pursued the life she had led before she knew him—engagements and acquaintances—with a mounting scorn for its emptiness. What is the point of it? She asked that question many times a day, and then another: Was there *ever* any point to it? Once or twice she saw Marjorie Wogan, who was back from a week in Rome. By some sorcery, a considerable amount of information passed between them without being put into words. Marjorie understood that Lily's situation had greatly changed since the day they had really talked to each other for the first time; Lily understood that she understood; it was agreed between them in the same wordless manner that these things were not to be discussed.

'You're looking better than when I saw you last,' Marjorie said to her at their first meeting.

'Oh, I am, I really am,' Lily answered.

Marjorie sighed.

'How lovely for you!' she said. 'Well, dear, Rome was a bore. You were lucky to be in Cannes. You must come up to lunch sometime and let me tell you all the ways in which Rome was a bore.'

The five days of busy emptiness produced one firm resolution inside Lily's well-regulated consciousness. She would never, she considered, get accustomed to the uncertainty of Ricardo's existence in its present form, and

since that was plainly true, she must proceed to change it. The notion of marriage, which she had produced at lunch with Henry—and perhaps, as she had the strength to admit, for no other reason than to torture Henry—had grown upon her ever since, although she had never mentioned it even in the vaguest way to Ricardo. Now it took on the distinct shape of resolution. She would not go on indefinitely in a situation which injured her pride as a woman, her sense of security and her reasonable predilection for order. All she had to do, so far as experience and observation indicated, was to make her point strongly enough at the right moments, several times over, and there could be no serious doubt as to the result.

And indeed, if it came to that, was she not an extremely good catch? She was rich and beautiful—rich by any ordinary standard, beautiful according to the testimony of both experts and amateurs. Had she not glided away from a series of suggestions leading toward the same end? Here in Cannes itself there were half a dozen aspirants she could name, either declared or incipient, and the fact that their aspirations did not interest her did not blind her to their existence. Ricardo, whoever he was, could hardly hope for better: he was by no means young. She speculated briefly about his age, as she had done once or twice before, and decided as before that he must be in his late forties. That is, he was enough older than herself to give her the natural superiority of youth. She could not have endured any relationship with a man who himself possessed that superiority. It was a reversal alien to her, and she had watched with tolerant scorn the exhibitions she had seen of women, frequent enough on this azure coast, pursuing the phantom of happiness through younger men.

By the time he returned, her mind was made up: she would marry him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SHE MADE her way along to the Bodega Malagueña. He had sounded strange on the telephone, and she assumed that he was worried again.

‘Could you come here by yourself, *palomita*?’ he asked. ‘I don’t want to go out just now. Somebody might be coming. And I don’t want to go up there.’

She agreed readily enough. She had only to take a taxicab to the port and find her way on foot; she had done it before, on his first disappearance. But she wondered what had happened now to increase his fears and tensions. She knew him to be courageous in the extreme—it was almost proclaimed in his looks—but she also knew that for others involved with him in his secret life he was afraid. What a man, after all, for Lily Soames to have incurred! Was it life’s revenge on all her certainties, all her ordered triumphs? The thought amused her in a wry fashion, appealing to that part of her which seemed always to stand aside and observe. She was happy over his return, just the same, and although he seldom gave evidence of appreciation in the detail of such matters, again she dressed with great care. If life wished to chastise or to educate her, at this late date, it could at least be said that she was a willing pupil, she thought.

He met her in the patio and they had dinner without delay, since it was already late for the kitchens of the place. There was not much light, but she thought he looked tired.

'You have worked too hard, Rico dear,' she said. 'I can see it.'

'Pigeon,' he said, 'have you seen Cisneros?'

This was immediately after their greeting, and before they had even ordered dinner. She thought it a bit precipitate and he realized it at once.

'Forgive me,' he said. 'It's important to me.'

He was holding her hands across the table. The place was empty and they had made no attempt to disguise or diminish their embrace when she arrived.

'I have not seen Cisneros,' she said. 'As a matter of fact, after you went away I no longer looked for him. Perhaps he was there. I don't know. I may have seen him without noticing him. I only noticed him, after all, because of you. What is the matter, darling?'

'The matter is,' he said slowly, 'that I *think* I have seen him. I cannot be sure. It was two nights after I left here. It was at night. It was dark.'

'Where?'

'In the streets of Perpignan.'

He caught his breath.

'That,' he stated heavily, withdrawing his hands, 'I should not have said. That was not a thing for me to say.'

'Oh, Rico, please don't be so distrustful! I am not an idiot. I realize that whatever you are doing must be in that direction, must be something which would take you toward Spain! Don't you realize that I think a little about your strange arrivals and departures? I don't ask questions but I can't help thinking, and it is not too difficult to guess.'

'Even so, I have no right to name any place or person,' he told her. 'There are too many others involved. It slipped out. I am sure you will forget it.'

'I'm not sure I can,' she said, 'but I can try. And in any

case it's quite safe with me. Of course I worry. Of course I wonder. But since you do not see fit to tell me anything, I make the best of it. Questions have been on the tip of my tongue many times and I haven't asked them.'

He sighed heavily. The fat woman arrived and he ordered their dinner. When she had gone away he spoke again.

'It is difficult for you, Lily,' he admitted with monumental gravity. 'I know. It may seem that I am treating you with a lack of consideration. This is not so. In truth I have no right to endanger other people by speaking of such things.'

'I understand,' she said, but in fact she did not understand. She understood only that some unease akin to misery had settled down on the table between them.

'If it was Cisneros I saw, it could be very dangerous. But I have no assurance that it was Cisneros. Nobody else of my friends saw him and in fact none of them actually know him. I could not see clearly. It was an impression. I hope I was wrong.'

'I hope you were wrong, Rico. You were already nervous when you left here.'

'I know it. Cisneros made me nervous, and that is why I may have imagined him where he was not. I take that into account. That is why I cannot be sure at all, one way or the other.'

'Then, since you can do nothing about it, why not forget it? Forget it to-night, anyhow,' she pleaded. 'It makes you unlike yourself.'

The tenderness broke through his rocky face.

'Pigeon,' he said, 'I'll try to forget the beast. And anyhow I'll not mention his beastly name. The pride of Castilla! Brrr! . . . What have you been doing, *palo-mita*? We'll talk a little and eat, since I'm famished, and the good Alella will help, and then we'll go upstairs and

forget very thoroughly, shall we? Tell me all about yourself for these long days since I went away.'

'My life when you are not here is stupidity itself,' she said. 'It makes me wonder how I lived it before you came. It makes me want to—what is that word? the Spanish word I've learned—*permanecer*. To make permanent.'

'What?'

'Us.'

'Not the Bodega?'

'Not the Bodega necessarily,' she said. 'Anywhere would do.' Then, unwilling to go too quickly at her appointed task, she abandoned the idea of permanence. 'These are just notions I get when you are not here. What did I do? Oh, Rico, how empty and nonsensical it all is!'

She told him, and presently, when they had finished dinner, they went upstairs to his quarters. She was a little startled to see an automatic pistol lying on the table, but he swept it off into a drawer before she was quite sure of her own surprise. It was a long time afterwards when she spoke again of the word *permanecer*.

'If we could be like this—as we are, as we have been—all the time, every day, every week, every month—could you be happy, Rico?'

'Yes. Yes.'

'I wish it could be so. Oh, how I wish it could be so!'

'I wish it too, but I am not free, *palomita*, you know that I am not free. There are times when I have to go away.'

'Some day it might be different, mightn't it, darling? Isn't there a chance that some day you would not have to go away so much, or so often?'

'Some day, perhaps. I don't know. When—when my work is done.'

'We could go on a ship through the Adriatic, we could

go to Greece, we could go to Marrakech,' she said dreamily, looking at the ceiling. 'How I wish we could do it now! And for that matter, I wish we could—well—even in Cannes, be perfectly open. "And by noonday as by midnight make her mine as hers she makes me." Something like that. It's absurd, perhaps, but I wish I could go everywhere with you. Even to Perpignan.'

'Ah! You promised to forget it!'

'I promised to try. Rico, say it. Say that you love me.'

Before he took her down to the waiting taxicab—the same one, driven by the trusted Spaniard whom she was instructed not to pay—he stood before her at the fireplace and spoke very seriously over his small glass of Fundador.

'What you were saying earlier, Lily, about permanence, about our going everywhere together, about our living together in fact, is something I hope you will dismiss from your mind. I don't see any possibility of it. It is not under my control, but very large demands are made on me for my work and they are never to be denied. I told you I also wished as you wish. But since it is not to be, what is the use of wishing it? Let us be glad life has given us so much and not ask for more. Perhaps I was wrong in taking so much, when there is so little that I have to offer. I am sorry.'

She was silent, looking up at him, smiling faintly.

'It seems unfair, not to say bitter, but I'm not fit for any such relationship,' he said. 'One day I may not come back at all.'

CHAPTER NINE

THE TIME grew timeless in that no day separated itself sharply from another, but elements of the life she was leading continued, diminished or augmented, braiding themselves together for Lily in such a way that she was conscious of progressions rather than of the given days. There was an inexorable necessity driving her toward the achievement of what she had in mind, and for the first time in her life she found herself unable to temporize or to conceal. She admonished herself severely when she was alone: 'You must not say such things. He is alarmed. He is worried. He is frightened. Hold your tongue, girl.' But in each evening with him she was driven sooner or later to the reiteration of her heart's desire. Heart's desire? She had used the expression herself, and even to him, aloud, and was not sure whether it was false or true. Heart's desire? Or was it, rather, determination? Was it longing or was it will? Was it a form (unworldly, perhaps, and the first of that ilk that might have been chalked up against her) of ambition? Was it merely the arrogance of the unconquered, the unconquerable Lily Soames? She considered all these alternatives without self-pity or illusion, and yet, whatever her intellect had decided, and usually against its decisions, she could not get through one single evening without in some way referring to her overwhelming wish for some form of regularity and permanence in their relationship. Never had she felt words arising, as these did, from some deep source that could not be controlled. After a while she

began to hear these words with genuine horror when they were pronounced by her own voice—as if they had been spoken through her, not by her—and yet she meant them every one. They were the truest words she spoke. They were so true that it began to seem that nothing else, love, passion or satisfaction, had any meaning as compared to these petitions (for that is what they were) toward the unattainable. The gathering certainty that what she wished could not come to pass only increased the intensity of the wish. She regarded even rapture itself, finally, as a prelude to the inevitable scene, implicit or explicit, of the plea and its refusal. She hardly knew when the word ‘marriage’ had first wandered, ghostlike, into these half-spoken but heavily freighted exchanges. She had said the word, unwillingly and in a way unknowingly, and then leaned back on the bed with her hand before her mouth as she gazed at his suddenly bloodless face. The word occurred again. She could not help it. He never discussed it. Often what happened was that her fatal intervention (and she was never quite sure when it would take place) was passed over in silence, with only the change of colour and the grim set of the jaw to show that it had been understood. She resolved in the autumn mornings never to say a word of the kind again, and in the autumn evenings the words would well up as if her throat were no better than a fountain beyond human rule.

‘Dear Henry,’ she wrote, since Henry had unaccountably stayed on in Paris, ‘the marriage project of which I spoke to you hangs in the air. I say that and yet I know it is not true. It does not hang in the air. The incredible truth is that the man I want to marry does not want to marry me. Does that enter your categories of probability? No. Nor mine. I have become something not quite myself, not quite somebody else, some poltergeist of

sorts, as if I had died and been unwillingly dragged forth from the unknowable to go through a séance with a stronger power. The man is mad, of course, but I think I must be even madder, because I find myself doing and above all saying things I had never intended to do or say. In every respect I look the same, so far as I can tell, and there is no outward sign of either irreversible degeneration or ultimate insanity, but I assure you that your calm and equable friend of other days is somehow gone. You often thought me too calm, too reasonable and too capable. These defects, if such they were, are no longer mine. Now I have others.'

Ricardo stayed three whole weeks in Cannes that time and then disappeared again for ten days. During his absence Lily, in sheer meaningless agitation of spirit, flew to Paris for three days and visited dress shops. He had told her he would be away at least a week. Cannes had begun to seem four or five removes from reality during these absences of his—it receded into distance, lost colour and definition. It was rather prettier that way, she reflected sourly, and not quite so much like a picture postcard, but even so it gave her an appalling loss of vital perception. When bright blue suddenly turns pale blue, and vivid pink becomes a maiden's blush, it is time, she thought, to look elsewhere. She bought nothing in Paris aside from odds and ends, but the mere inspection of clothing was in itself an interest to her and helped to bring her back to life. When she came out of a shop in the rue Cambon one day she ran into Henry.

'Well,' he said equably, 'you're looking fine. Come right over here to the Ritz and have lunch with me.'

'I could,' she said. 'It is not impossible. That is, I have no engagement, because I'm not really in Paris. But I feel sure you've got fifteen engagements. I know you, Henry.'

'It's true, I've got one,' he said, unperturbed. 'That's easy. It's only a lawyer and I don't want to see him anyhow—he wants to see me. He'll take another day.'

He got her into the Ritz and over to the other side where he found a table.

'Now,' he said, 'after you've had at least something to drink, and I recommend a glass of champagne, I want to know what the hell you've been talking about in this last letter to me. Insanity?'

'Not violent,' she said demurely. 'That may come. I'll have a dry martini, Henry. The last time I had one was with you in Cannes. This one could be commemorative. Is that Sally Roquebrune over there? My goodness, she looks a hundred and thirteen years old.'

'She is. But never mind that. Are you in real trouble, Lily?'

'How good you are!' She meant this; an awareness of his goodness struck her now and then, although she had little use for it. 'I don't think anybody can help. I'm entangled with—I don't really know what—a werewolf or a will-o'-the-wisp. Impossible to describe the situation. I'm not very hungry. Can I have oysters and salad?'

His steady gaze was reassuring in itself, although she had no desire to tell him in detail what her trouble was. She could not, in fact, find the right words even in her incessant inner dialogue: for the most troublous of the troubles was not the wish for marriage and Ricardo's revolt against it. That could be stated plainly enough, even though not understood. No: the crux of the matter was that she herself was out of control, was in the grip of an obsession, was perhaps driving Ricardo away from her by this hopeless and helpless insistence upon the impossible. Impossible? Time was when Lily Soames had not recognized the word as applicable to herself or any

situation in which she might imaginably be.

Now . . ?

She sighed heavily.

'I want you to know something if you don't know it already,' Henry said. 'Whatever happens, I'm with you. You have only to give a sign and I'll come to wherever you are. If I can help you I will. I don't understand what's the matter but it makes no difference. If you want me to break the man's neck I'll try.'

'That wouldn't precisely advance the cause,' Lily said, smiling in spite of herself. 'You're a dear, Henry. I'll remember. Now we must eat.'

And she did remember, all during the flight to Cannes and during the next day or so before Ricardo's return. What impish contrariety in the scheme of things made Henry's goodness, his devotion, a source of boredom to her? She should have accounted herself the luckiest of women. But it was never any use saying what ought to be, what should be; she had to deal—and always had dealt—with the existing thing, that which is.

When she got out of the aeroplane she saw a lemony thin face, a stiff bow: it was Cisneros, Ricardo's *bête noire*. She acknowledged his salutation as coldly as possible and turned her attention to her maid Françoise, who had come to meet her.

'*Je n'ai rien acheté, Françoise,*' she chattered. '*Presque rien. Étonnant comme il n'y a plus rien à acheter à Paris.*'

She realized herself that 'nothing' was hardly a word to describe the numerous packages with which she was laden; she was only talking nervously to fill up a space-time interval during which she felt Cisneros looking and listening. He moved off. She could not have explained why he made her nervous, except that Ricardo seemed to think him sinister; she had no reason to share that feeling; it was, like so much that surrounded her just now,

'It's true. When she did not see Cisneros at the hotel, easy. Had expected, she experienced a certain relief; he was evidently staying elsewhere this time and she could dispense with that cool nod she so disliked giving him. Ricardo, she thought (and it was half pleasure and half pain), should be back in two days' time at the latest.

CHAPTER TEN

Françoise came into the bedroom with a card.

'Duquesa de Balbuena,' it said.

Lily turned it over. On the back were a few words in English: 'Could I have fifteen minutes' only, with you alone?'

'Is somebody waiting for an answer?' she said.

'There is a maid there in the sitting room,' Françoise informed her. 'Very old. Spanish, I think.'

Ricardo had not returned the night before. Lily felt certain that this visitation, whatever it might be, concerned him. What else could it be? She felt a pang of alarm, and then reflected that the bearer of such a name as this could hardly be involved in Ricardo's schemes. Whatever it was, she would have to see the woman and get it over with. She scribbled on one of her own cards: 'I shall be ready to talk to the Duquesa at any time after half-past ten.' When she had given Françoise the message she lay for a little longer in bed, sipping coffee and trying to absorb the meaningless headlines in the newspapers. She was impatient to see this Spanish woman—and how foolish, really! The woman would probably turn out to be somebody trying to sell embroidery, or to rent a draughty old country house in Catalonia, or maybe even just a woman wanting money. Such things often happened to Lily. But now, because Ricardo occu-

pied so much of her consciousness and her life, the merest mention of a Spanish name connected itself with him. Thus reasoning herself into equanimity, she completed her bath and toilet and went into the sitting room at half-past ten. Within a few minutes the bell sounded at the door.

The woman whom Françoise admitted was delicate, small, old, dressed in black, with white edges at the neck and wrists. On her head was a caplike hat, also of black with a white edge around the face. But there was nothing rusty about this black: it was filmy but severe, in a cut which Lily recognized immediately as being of the most superior order. The lady stood there, smiling rather nervous, and Lily came over to her.

'Ma chère?' she said. 'Do come in.'

'Mr. Coames? It is very good of you to see me,' the old woman said, coming forward and touching Lily's hand. How old could she be? Heavens, Lily thought, she's over seventy, she must be.)

'Perhaps you'd like to sit over here by the balcony,' Lily said, taking her across the room. She had spoken first in French, but the reply had come in correct English, slowly and beautifully pronounced, so Lily returned to her native tongue thereafter.

'Cannes is lovely,' the old lady said, accepting a chair just inside the gauzy curtain at the balcony. 'I have not been here for years. We do not travel much, in our family. At least most of us do not.'

She seemed to be struggling for composure, and yet her walk, the set of her head, her way of sitting down, had a downright regality of style. It would have been difficult to imagine a more notable combination of shyness, genuine shyness, with perfect dignity and assurance. She was the sort of woman who never had to look to see whether the chair would be there or not; it always was.

She turned her eyes, soft and blue and somehow young in that delicate old face, directly upon Lily, and looked at her with a perfectly frank but not unfriendly curiosity. Her hands betrayed her agitation but neither her face nor her voice gave anything away. On her right hand there was one ring, an enormous and very valuable emerald, next to an old-fashioned gold wedding band. There was a moment of suspended animation. Lily felt herself inspected.

'May I offer you some coffee, Madame?' she asked, more to break the silence than to be polite.

'You are beautiful,' the Duquesa said. 'I had been told that you were beautiful and I see that it is true. Yes, thank you, I shall have some coffee, if you do. The doctors tell me not to drink coffee but I never do what they say and it does not seem to matter much.'

Lily rang a bell and asked Françoise for the coffee. It was ten or fifteen minutes before it came. She got up and drew the curtain at the balcony so that the autumn sunlight streamed into the room. The old lady looked out at the sea.

'You must think me intrusive, bold,' she said. 'You are probably right. My motives are good, I think. I want to help you.'

'That is kind of you,' Lily said. 'May I ask in what way?'

The Duquesa smiled gently at her.

'Your directness,' she said, 'is nice. I like it. I suppose that is American—to come straight to the point.'

She paused and put a very small handkerchief to her pale lips.

'I knew some very nice Americans once in Madrid,' she said. 'Now, what was their name? I really can't remember, and it was quite a long while ago so perhaps they are dead. Have you ever been to Madrid?'

'I have never been in Spain,' Lily said, puzzled but unwilling to be impatient. 'There was war when I wanted to go, and I've never, somehow, gone back to the idea.'

'We think too highly of ourselves in Spain,' the old lady pursued, now looking again at the sea. 'That is what all our intellectuals say, at any rate. We are provincial. We are cut off by a Great Wall. The Pyrenees are a Great Wall.'

There seemed little to add to this statement, so Lily said nothing. The Duquesa made a slight coughing noise behind her wispy handkerchief, the sort of embarrassed signal of a change in course.

'I have three sons,' she said, 'besides two daughters. It has always been believed in our family that Ricardo was my favourite, although I have always tried to be rigorously just and to show no preference between them. Ricardo is the second, as you know.'

Lily gazed at her in startled silence. She could have said nothing at that moment. The Duquesa seemed content to maintain the silence for a while, gazing thoughtfully at the sea.

'Religion plays an enormous part in the life of Spain,' she resumed eventually. 'In other countries—France, for instance—people can hardly comprehend how deeply religion affects every act of our lives, every development of our minds and even of our history. All of our national or popular or mass movements take some religious form, even when they are, as so often, anti-religious. In a way we have no secular history. Everything that happens to us is bound up with religion or the Church, for it or against it. We are not a secular people.'

She turned back to Lily and smiled again, that gentle and rather tentative smile in which the appeal was clouded by fear of a rebuff.

'I am a boring old woman,' she said. 'You must not mind my wordiness. I am really trying to help you.'

'Madame,' Lily said, trying to keep the edge out of her voice, 'did Ricardo ask you to come here?'

'Oh, no. Ricardo has no communication with us at all. I, for one, regret it very much, but his political and social ideas are regarded with horror in our family. He is a rebel. I am getting so old now that I cannot really see much difference. The rebels of yesterday are the Tories of to-morrow, somebody in England once told me, and it really does seem to be true, as I look back.'

'Then,' Lily went on, 'if he did not ask you to come, who did? You have said that you like directness, and I am taking you at your word.'

'Let me see,' she said, 'who did? Why, I suppose, nobody. We have been informed of his great interest in you, his great admiration for you. There are—how shall I say it?—sources of information.'

'Cisneros,' Lily heard herself saying flatly, in a cold, expressionless voice; she regretted having spoken at once.

'Cisneros? Maybe. I don't really know that. But anyhow I thought I might come to see you to explain a few things that might not, perhaps, be so apparent to you. You know, my dear, that we come of extremely different cultures. I've lived in England and France long enough to realize how different we are in Spain. My husband was in the diplomatic service for years.'

She kept on smiling at Lily, refusing to acknowledge the new tone that had come over their talk.

'I have read a good deal about Spain,' Lily said, 'even though I have never been there.' Her voice was much on edge; she took a deep breath and went on more equably: 'I am always willing to learn, however. I have learned a great deal by deliberate effort—that is, by trying to do so.'

'I, too,' said the Duquesa approvingly. 'In fact I used to be regarded as rather a bluestocking in my own family. I went to lectures at the Sorbonne, when we were stationed in Paris, and I even tried to go in Salamanca when it was not permitted. I am not just a provincial old Castilian duchess living on a rock. We might find it quite possible to be friends, I should think.'

'I hope so, Madame,' Lily said. She could say little else, but in truth she was profoundly bewildered and pierced by resentment, although what there was to resent was not wholly apparent.

'Ah, here is coffee!' the Duquesa said. 'How nice! We all love coffee in Spain. Such a lucky thing, the discovery of America. Of course we do get coffee from Africa too but it isn't the same. They make it differently in France, of course—ours is stronger or less roasted; anyhow ours does not have the chicory taste. Well, really, neither has this. It's in fact very good coffee.'

Most of this was for the benefit of Françoise, Lily realized, and yet her own irritation could not help but increase. When Françoise had gone from the room the Duquesa put her cup down on a little table beside her.

'I should like to ask you something, Mrs. Soames,' she said gravely. Her delicate old face puckered a little. She almost looked as if she might be going to cry. 'Do you love my son Ricardo?'

Lily sipped at her coffee.

'I hardly know how to answer,' she said, after a pause. 'I might say that I do not know yet why you ask. However, since you like directness, I think I shall say, simply, yes.'

She valued honesty and abhorred unnecessary lies so she could not let this go unqualified.

'People mean so many different things when they use the word love,' she added slowly. 'I do not believe I have

ever felt about anybody as I do about Ricardo. I know I haven't. Yet how can I be sure that this feeling is what you have in mind when you say the word love?"

The Duchess was so intent upon the blue sea outside that she seemed not to notice Lily, perhaps not even to hear her. There was a silence even longer than before. It appeared that Madame de Balbuena, having professed such a passion for coffee, had lost it rather suddenly. Her cup sat untouched beside her on the little table. Lily waited, no longer angry or resentful but interested (perhaps even concerned) over what might come next, like a spectator in a theatre. Finally the Duquesa turned toward her and smiled again, very sweetly.

'My dear,' she said, 'do you want to marry him?'

Lily was brave.

'Yes,' she said.

The old woman sighed. After she sighed, the black taffeta over her bosom rose slightly and, catching the light from outside, revealed what Lily had hardly perceived until then, an enormous round diamond with blue lights in it. The diamond blazed across at her like some ominous signal, some baleful warning. It was really a colossal stone, many-faceted in the old-fashioned way, set into an enamel cross with filigree edges. This enamel cross, obviously old, possibly seventeenth century but certainly at least eighteenth, hung at the end of a chain which, Lily now observed, was gold and filigree and also very old. It disappeared under the white edging at the neck of the dress, which was not—as now appeared—a part of the dress, but a piece of embroidery inserted into the dress. These details at eleven o'clock in the morning revealed to Lily what she had immediately suspected, that the Duquesa had taken great care for her appearance on this occasion.

Lily knew jewels. She also knew dress. As she sat

there, slightly in the shade at one side of the balcony with Madame de Balbuena in the full light (although not yet the direct sunshine) from outside, she tabulated every detail before her. The one vast emerald on the right hand and the one vast diamond in the cross were, between them, a fortune. They might be, she reflected, as much as tens of thousands of dollars. The actual figures occurred to her, since that was the habituation of her mind, but she discarded the figure at once because she had learned that such things were not to be estimated so exactly. Whatever they were, they were very old, no doubt very famous, and unquestionably very valuable. The old woman's dress was in every likelihood from Paris. Her shoes were handmade pumps of the most exquisite dull leather, and Lily could have said the name of the very Italian (also working in Paris) who had made them. The toes of these shoes were rather long for contemporary taste; the heels were neither high nor low. The stockings, only visible from time to time as the old lady moved, were of such a gossamer texture that they could hardly even be called black—they had no colour except that of her thin shanks. Lily surveyed all this with a trepidant wonder. Why had the old lady taken such trouble?

In her nervousness, she rose and moved toward the balcony to look out. She was dressed in a white piqué garment, very suitable for the season and the hour, with which she wore some costume jewellery which had been designed by the designer of the dress and sold with it. This costume jewellery clinked and clashed faintly on her right wrist as she moved. She turned back in irritation from the balcony. Without any pretence at concealment, she unclasped the three costume bracelets, took them off and put them on the table.

Madame de Balbuena spoke.

'Dear Mrs. Soames,' she said, 'I must tell you the truth. My son Ricardo can never marry anybody.'

Lily stood tense and stiff in the shadow at the right side of the balcony.

'Why not?' she asked.

The fragile little old woman replied at once, with an energy which did not depend upon the tone of her voice or the amount of breath she put into it. It was vibrant from another source.

'It would be sacrilege,' she said.

Lily was near the end of her tether.

'Madame,' she said frigidly, 'I do not have the honour to understand you. I am an adult American woman, regarded with some esteem in my own country. I am, so far as I am made aware, a welcome guest in France. If I have offended you, I am sorry. What more can I say? You cannot compel me to be rude.'

The Duchess picked up the coffee cup from the table beside her and looked at it. She did not drink any of the coffee (it was very cold by now) but she looked at the cup, rather absently, rather as if she were thinking of something else, but also as if she wondered what period it belonged to or who might have been its maker. Then she put it down again, very gently.

'I really wonder,' she said, looking across the balcony at the brilliant day, 'if you know what sacrilege is.'

Lily was stirred by a different wind this time—it was this way and it was that; she could hardly tell what was coming next; the woman had taken possession of her.

'I will tell you the truth,' she said. 'I do not know what sacrilege is.'

The old woman sighed again and the immense diamond gleamed balefully in the light, warned its warning, dreed its dree, subsided again on the ancient breast, like

some prehistoric monster that only came to life from time to time for purposes inimical to mankind.

And then the most astonishing thing of all took place. It took place almost at once, in a very few seconds, while Lily was sitting there, stiff and silent, looking on from her corner. The old woman fell asleep.

She fell sound asleep. There was no question whatever about it. Her head was just as erect as ever. Her eyelids closed and she breathed more deeply than before. Her breast rose and fell (withered dugs, Lily thought with venom, the withered dugs of a witch) rather more steadily, noticeably and serviceably than before. The large bluish diamond in the enamel-and-filigree cross flashed rhythmically in the light: *Beware!—Ah!—Beware!—Ah!* The pale old hands were folded in the midst of the black taffeta. The emerald glowed and menaced and then withdrew its fire in pride. The old gold wedding band shone dim and steady alongside the ferocious emerald. The feet in their carefully fashioned leather were motionless, side by side like the dead sovereigns of Egypt. But the old lady's face was sweet, gentle and loving, untouched by sun or wind, benevolent in the purity of its contour and the pallor of its tint. She slept.

Lily got up and crept away to the other side of the room. She was filled with revulsion against everything she had seen or heard. What was the year, after all? What was the date or the place? Was this Lily Soames? Could a wraith like this, from the red rocks of Castile, enshroud a living day? The old woman was insufferable. She might be duchess of everything from Boken to Hoboken but she was still insufferable. She had no more manners than a goat. She was a fantastic survival from periods all men long to forget. She probably beat her servants or starved them, or both, and forced her daugh-

ters to take baths with their underclothes on. She was totally and forever insufferable.

Lily went into the bedroom and found Françoise tranquilly knitting.

'Get me some champagne,' she said fiercely. 'Get it quick. I only want one glass of it but I need it immediately.'

Françoise looked only a little surprised and then disappeared.

What was there about Françoise, now? Ah, yes. She had been notably deferential to the old Duchess. She had bowed just a little lower, swept her arms just a little more. The Duquesa had never looked at Françoise. The crime, if there was a crime, was in Françoise.

Lily was irritated at that, too.

Françoise brought the champagne quickly—the floor waiter's lair was only next door—and Lily drank a whole glass of it thirstily. Then, with a keen look at herself in the big looking glass, she went back to the sitting room.

Madame de Balbucna's eyes were wide open.

'I'm so ashamed,' she said with a ghost of a chuckle. 'I do believe I dropped off to sleep for a moment. It's a sort of family joke, the way I do that. A penalty of my age, I suppose. I hope you'll forgive me.'

'It doesn't matter,' Lily said, feeling somewhat refreshed by the champagne. 'I had to leave the room for a second anyhow. You were saying?'

'Now, let's see, what was I saying?' the old lady commented. 'I think we were talking of sacrilege. You see, Ricardo should have been a priest. That is, a monk.'

'What do you mean?'

'He was in training. He had even taken some preliminary vows, not binding, not permanent. Then—then—to the sorrow of all our family, he adopted the fashionable views of the day. So many young people, even in

our oldest houses, were carried away just then. It was just at the end of the monarchy and the young people were all seething with the new notions. He left his whole scheme of life and became some kind of Republican. It was a sorrow to us all.'

Lily tried to understand.

'Whatever his political views,' she said, 'and I think I know what you're telling me, where is the sacrilege?'

'In him,' she said placidly, as if she were discussing a cold in the head. 'He bears it inside him. Whatever he may believe in these social and political ways—all these new ideas of his—cannot alter the fact that he had begun to take the vows and might, in another year, have taken them forever. This he could never forget. He is a Spaniard above all.'

Lily rose again in her agitation and stood against the corner of the balcony. Her hands smoothed down the white piqué dress, which with all this movement was getting a little wrinkled. She did not think it had been well pressed and was annoyed with Françoise again.

'He is not a priest,' she said. 'He is not a monk. He has quite different ideas and has had them for many years. Then why on earth would it be sacrilege for him to marry?'

'In his own mind,' the Duquesa explained, as if to a child. 'That is, it would not be technically sacrilege according to the Church's definitions, I believe. But the sacrilege would be in his own mind.'

'I find this almost incomprehensible,' Lily murmured, partly to herself.

'You see, Holy Orders is a sacrament and so is Matrimony,' the Duquesa elucidated. 'He was more than half into one of those sacraments and he cannot go into another. The two exclude each other. Do you not see?'

A memory came back to Lily with the utmost vividness.

'Sin?' she asked. 'What of sin?'

'That is a different thing,' the old woman declared. 'Sin is common among poor weak creatures. It can be forgiven.'

'No matter how often committed?'

'No matter how often. The mercy of God is infinite.'

Then she smiled again, as if afraid of her own solemnity.

'Dear Mrs. Soames,' she said, 'I seem to be delivering a sermon and I did not come here for that. I came to see if I could not help you to understand why marriage is impossible for Ricardo. He has only, really, exchanged one priesthood for another. He is just as consecrated, in his own strange way, to these obsessive ideas of his as he ever could have been to a religious order. I may regret every word I am saying. All these words are nonetheless true.'

There was something a little quaint about the Duquesa's English. Lily, listening through a kind of unbelieving numbness, noted the word 'nonetheless' and doubted that she had ever heard it pronounced aloud before.

'I did not say I was going to marry Ricardo,' she was able to get out at last. 'You asked me if I wanted to. I said that I did. It was while we were discussing love, the many different meanings. You asked the question and I answered. I did not say that there is any such plan or intention.'

'Good,' the old lady said crisply. 'You are a sensible girl.'

Lily's ire, controlled by character and champagne, rose to the surface again.

'You have been informed of so many things, Duquesa, that you cannot fail to have heard that I am divorced. I suppose this plays some part in your thought or feeling on this subject. I suppose you do not recognize divorce.'

'I don't know,' the old lady said thoughtfully. 'I really do think it's probably a good thing in some cases. Of course our Church and our State do not recognize it. But I've seen so much—really there are many marriages, even in Spain, which ought to be terminated, out of sheer compassion for the sufferers concerned. And of course, living abroad, I met many divorced persons. On the whole I think I believe it's a good thing when really required. What I don't believe in is re-marriage.'

'I see,' said Lily. 'Sin is all right, but sacrilege is all wrong. Divorce is all right, but re-marriage is all wrong. It appears to me that I should be forced to learn a whole new vocabulary if I continued this discussion on anything like equal terms.'

'You want me to go?' The old lady looked troubled, sorry; she smiled the same wistful smile. 'I am so sorry. I have offended you. I did not mean to do so.'

'No,' Lily cut in. 'You came here to help me.'

The sunlight, which had been creeping across the floor, reached the Duchess at last. She moved squeamishly, although so far the sun had only touched her feet and part of her dress. That soft old skin had probably never been exposed to the sun, except by rare accident, for seventy years or more. In the increased light and the lady's movement the old blue diamond flashed from the enamelled cross and the vast emerald—rounded on top and, Lily guessed, table-flat beneath—glowed murkily.

'Perhaps you would like to sit further into the room, Madame,' she said. 'The sun will be full on you in a minute.'

'You are kind,' the old lady said, getting up. 'It is true that I do not sit in the sun. We have not that custom where I live.'

They retreated to a corner across the room where sofa, chairs and tables had been (by the hotel, of course)

arranged so as to behold the sun and the sea without undue proximity.

'I have not much more to say,' the Duquesa said when she was resettled. 'I have already over-stayed my welcome. I have told you what I think it my duty to tell you. I have no right to influence your decisions, but only to tell you what I know to be the truth.'

'I shall try to be grateful to you,' said Lily, 'although you must understand that all this is difficult.'

'Of course, dear child. You come from another world, another planet almost—that strange and wonderful country that I have never seen. How could you know the terrible depths we have in our old mountains?'

Lily, who was not much of a smoker, longed for a cigarette and decided against it.

'I have one important thing to ask, and one only,' the Duquesa went on. 'You will not refuse me because I can see that you are not only beautiful but good. I ask you not to tell my son that I have been here.'

'You ask a good deal,' Lily said after a pause. 'Why? Or rather, why not? If your information is correct, I may not be able to keep many secrets from your son.'

'Believe me, no good could come of it. He has had no communication with me or with any of us for years. Nevertheless, he is my son. I know him. He would go quite wild. He has a fierce rage. He is very Spanish.'

She got up slowly, more or less in instalments, although there was not much of her to move. She was a tiny old lady with beautiful young blue eyes, and there was nothing unfriendly in her face. Lily felt the weird and suffocating emotion of defeat: it was new to her. She thrust it away by breathing deeply.

'I must go now,' the Duquesa said. 'Thank you for loving my son. If he were other than what he is . . . However, it is useless. I wish we could have been friends.'

Forgive anything I may have said to offend. I came here at some risk; my other sons would be angry if they knew. I only felt that it was necessary.'

Her eyes looked up (not much, but nevertheless up) at Lily. There was a touch of the hand.

'I am sorry,' she said.

Lily walked with her to the door and then, at the door, obeyed the law of juniority, more or less against her own will, by walking on to the lift with the old woman. Neither one spoke again. Lily rang for the lift, which came at once from downstairs through the open ormolu cage. The old lady smiled faintly and made a farewell gesture with her right hand—not a wave, not a salute, merely a stretching out of the hand; it was somehow a sad movement. Then the door shut and the lift went upwards to her own floor. Lily, standing there, saw the slow ascent through the open ironwork. The last she saw of the Duquesa was the exquisitely tooled dull leather shoes with pointed toes, side by side like the dead sovereigns of Egypt.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FRANÇOISE CAME into the sitting room and found Lily sitting there with her head in her hands. Through the slim fingers it must be obvious that there had been tears. Lily sat up angrily.

'Look at this dress,' she said. 'Look at it! It has not been pressed properly. Perhaps it has not been pressed at all.'

'I pressed it myself last night and it has been hanging since then,' said Françoise, neither grieved nor hurt, but distinctly haughty. 'I am sorry if my work does not give satisfaction. I have been in the best houses and have seldom encountered criticism. If my work does not please Madame I can return to Paris.'

'Oh, go to Paris or go wherever you like!' Lily said. 'Is there any more of that champagne? I must change my dress before I go to lunch. Oh, Françoise, don't be angry! I'm just a little upset. That blue linen dress, let me wear that. I want to change everything.'

She busied herself with such details for the three-quarters of an hour that remained to her before a necessary luncheon (all women) downstairs in the hotel.

Ricardo returned.

From the sound of his voice on the telephone that very evening she could tell that something of importance had happened to him or for him. He sounded gay, confident, neither so cautious nor so preoccupied as the last time, you

He wanted her to come to dinner at the Malagueña but it was too late for her to countermand the dinner for which she was already engaged. She promised to be in front of the hotel at eleven and he said he would pick her up there.

'I'm sorry,' she said, 'but it would be very awkward to cancel my engagement. It would cause trouble.'

'Oh, let's have no trouble, no trouble at all!' he said, and laughed.

'You sound different,' she said. 'Has something happened?'

'I'll tell you,' he said. 'I'll tell you all I can. I do feel better—about everything. Have you missed me, pigeon?'

She left her dinner early and got back to the hotel in time to change her evening dress for something else. She had grown used to the Bodega and the port, but she still did not take to the notion of visiting them in full regalia. He was on the Croisette, a little down from the hotel, as he had promised to be, and the same Spanish taxi driver was waiting a few yards away.

'Quick!' he said. 'Into the cab!'

She sprang into the cab in some alarm.

'What's the matter?' she asked.

'I am in haste,' he said, 'to kiss you.'

Their evening was physical reunion and union more complete than Lily could remember, and yet some part of her mind reverted again and again to the old lady. It was a troublesome thought, like a tune that runs in the head and will not be dispelled. She did not mention the old lady but the picture of that delicate little being came and went. Hours later, when he stood in his usual way before the fireplace and she sat on the sofa sipping her *andador*, he caught her looking at him in what he thought a peculiar manner.

'You are inspecting me,' he said. 'Have you discovered some new aspect? Do not keep it secret.'

She did not tell him how she was wondering at the mystery of generation—how this angular man of fierce bone and sinew could have emerged from the fragile body of the old Duquesa. She could not have explained why she was keeping to the Duquesa's behest; there was no reason why she should not tell him all about it; she had not given her word or any promise of any kind. But there was, as it were, a finger across her lips, an invisible finger, and she did not speak.

He, however, spoke volubly. He was in high spirits about this strange and unmentionable work of his—it was apparently going well, things were going to happen at last. He seemed very pleased with himself and all others concerned.

'I truly wish I could tell you all about it, *palomita*,' he said tenderly. 'If it were only myself I should not hesitate. It's for the others that I have to be so careful. What a joy it would be to share all the plans with you! But, you see, it is a little dangerous, and you might, all unconsciously, put everything in peril. It isn't work you know about. How lovely you look, sitting there! How I hate the idea of leaving you again!'

As things had been in recent weeks, such an opening would have produced from Lily, automatically and even against her own will, some reference to her own desire for permanence. This time it did not happen. Instead she asked, with her lips stiffening a little: 'Must you go soon again, Ricardo?'

'I don't know,' he told her, his face a little shadowed. 'It is not for me to say. A week, two weeks. I don't know.'

His hawklike head was bent a little. Don Quixote, she thought, how I should enchain you if I could, you

madman, how I should draw Vulcan's net about you and tether it to the bedpost! She finished her Fundador.

'Darling, it is very late and I must go. I was happy to-night. I don't want to think of your going away again. Let's not mention it. I will try to forget.'

Forget she did, with some measure of success, for a few days. The picture of the old Duquesa, which had brought her no great comfort or 'help' in the actual instance of the other morning, was nevertheless, until it began to fade, a deterrent to any expression of her anxiety and her obsession. The old lady seemed to rise up and say 'Shh!' whenever the danger of such utterance was nigh. But this did not last long because the picture dimmed and went away, to return more and more infrequently and with less force. Then, as the count of the days mounted, her anxiety increased. She knew that he must soon go again. It was not long, therefore, until the fatal words began to reappear.

'We could be like this always, always,' she said. 'You have only to say it and it will be true. I cannot bear the life we lead. We should be . . .'

He pulled himself away from her and stood up. In a moment he had slipped into his bathrobe and disappeared into the sitting room part of his quarters. Slowly, after a while, she dressed and went out to him. He was now dressed for the street and stood by the chimney with a glass of Fundador in his hand. He gave her one with solemn courtesy, as if they had met in his mother's house. She sat down and looked at him.

'I am sorry, *palomita*,' he said.

She did not speak. Fear and something—yes—something like anger possessed her. He began to talk about Spain and presently her ears caught some phrase about poverty, the lifelong suffering of the very poor workers in field and factory.

'I've never observed that the rich were much happier than the poor,' she remarked with some acidity.

'What do you know of the poor?' he asked her, not roughly at all, but in wonder.

'Ricardo mio, I have often told you that I was born poor.'

'But what do you mean by poor?'

'My mother kept a boarding house and I worked in it after school hours. We never had any money beyond our necessities, and it was not easy to get that.'

'But the necessities, those necessities . . ? Did you have modern plumbing in your house?'

'Yes.'

'Did you have electricity?'

'Yes.'

'A telephone?'

'Yes.'

'Shoes in all seasons?'

'Yes.'

He flicked his bony fingers.

'The poor in Spain,' he said, 'are poor.'

She sipped her brandy.

'We always had enough food,' she said at last. 'That's one advantage of a boarding house, I suppose. There were many things I wanted and couldn't have, but I can't remember that it bothered me too much. Perhaps I was not really poor, as you define it. I can only say that we thought we were poor.'

'You went through the elementary and secondary schools of your country,' he said. 'Have you any notion of how few people in Spain have done that? And do you know that many, many of our people are half-starved from birth to death? The barefoot peasant women in the south—Oh, so picturesque!—know more about their pillaged earth, their barren soil, than any professor of

agronomy. It would take many generations of them to restore the earth to normal productivity. That's why they don't even try—they just scratch and starve.'

She felt that she had thrown him into a temper by those fatal words a while ago: all this was a deflection, a howling-away of the storm.

'You suffer too much, Rico,' she said tentatively. 'It is not your fault.'

'It is the fault of every one of us,' he said. 'It is certainly the fault of every Spaniard. My ancestors, for instance, enslaved the people for centuries, tied them to the land, starved them and beat them and made them the children of despair. It is a great debt.'

'You do not have to pay it all alone,' she contended, looking up at him with eyes wide and serious. 'That would be madness, Rico.'

'If each one tried, it could be done,' he answered. 'I can do nothing alone. Nobody can. But in association . . .'

He left that sentence unfinished and lighted a cigarette for her and one for himself.

'Have you seen that man Cisneros lately?' he asked.

'He was here—he came from Paris on the same plane I took, ten days or so ago. I don't know where he went. He doesn't seem to be at the hotel.'

'Why didn't you tell me?'

'I didn't think of it,' she said coolly. In fact she had refrained from telling him because she disliked the effect that the mere name or idea of Cisneros invariably produced. Even now the bony fingers were alive with nerves.

'That man haunts me,' Rico said. 'There are times when I see him and cannot be sure that it is not my own imagination. That night in Perpignan—I told you—weeks ago. There was another just lately, two or three nights

ago, here in the port. I could not get close enough to be sure. Then he vanished.'

'If I do see him,' she said, 'I promise to tell you. When he was here before I met him once or twice at parties. He bowed to me at the airport.'

'Ah!' Ricardo said slowly, looking at her with a far-away gaze.

She could not remember whether she had or had not told him of those few meaningless meetings she had had with Cisneros. Probably she had not, in which case it was a mistake to tell him now. She rose and put her Fundador glass on the mantelpiece.

'Forget him, darling,' she said, stroking his sharp jaw. 'Forget him. He is only a phantom. I suppose he only comes here to gamble at the Casino.'

'Do you go there? If you go there and see him gambling, will you tell me? His parents were great gamblers. It is possible that he has no other purpose here. His mother was a Basque woman from Bilbao—did I tell you?—and had an immense fortune.'

'You told me. You told me all about him. Rico, forgive me for having irritated you a while ago. I don't want to spoil a beautiful evening. Am I forgiven?'

'It is I who should ask forgiveness,' he said, leaning down to brush her soft cheek against his lips. 'Forgive me, if you can, for being myself.'

That was it, she thought drearily the next day. He was himself: that was precisely why she loved him, if love it was. But, being himself, he could not belong to her or to anybody else. He belonged to this infinite inimical otherness which she did not understand, lying across frontiers for which she had no passport in her mind. What was the otherness, what were its elements, how could she go about studying it so as to penetrate the strange country?

Lily had devoted a good part of her life to study. She

believed in it as completely as any scholar could, and her method when she delved was not much different from that of a scholar. In this respect she was distinct from the *poules de luxe* whom she was otherwise thought (but by the unthinking) to resemble. What she had done with the French language and literature, with the theory and history of art, with anthropology, archæology and even, years ago, with mathematics, she could equally well do with Ricardo's mysteries if she only knew what they were. Her system was to make a bibliography on small white cards, as she had learned to do in high school, and then read her way through it systematically, storing up whatever she found useful in the form of tightly written notes in a loose-leaf notebook. Countless hours which other women of privilege were accustomed to pass with manicurists, dressmakers, hairdressers and psychoanalysts, were devoted by Lily to this kind of pursuit, incongruous though it seemed even to herself. It was by such means, which only Steve had really understood, that Lily made herself an educated woman. 'You go ahead, kid, it's too late for me to do it, but I'm all for you,' Steve used to say when he came upon her at work in this way. She had for study, and for its results, the kind of practical esteem and familiar acquaintance that an oil man has for an oil well. She was not far from believing that everything in the human predicament would yield, in time, to these methods, when enough intelligent human beings pursued them far enough and long enough.

Ricardo's mysteries could hardly be different from others. What were they? He was Spanish. He was Catholic, according to his mother, whether he rebelled against it or not. He was some sort of radical revolutionary, too, although of a species Lily could not fit into the categories. But most of all he was Spanish and Catholic.

She could, of course, study the Spanish language, and resolved to do so at some later time. Just now what she needed most of all was some comprehension of the heredity and environment of a Spanish Catholic, the world-soul in which his own soul was cocooned, the passions, prejudices and aspirations shared (according to the old Duquesa) by every Spaniard born. Her bibliographical method would not apply because the subject was too large or too diffuse for the catalogues. Pondering, frustrated, lost in a bookshop which burgeoned with French novels about sexual triangles and English works on World War II, she ran into Marjorie Wogan.

'I'm flummoxed and you're just the friend in need,' she said. 'Marjorie, don't laugh at me, but I want to read something about Spanish Catholicism. That is, about *especially* Spanish Catholicism. Not just Catholicism—I've read quite a bit about that.'

Marjorie smiled.

'I'm not laughing at you,' she specified. 'I'm enjoying the fun you're having. This is just a friendly smile. My dear, what do you expect to find in this place? It's for fat women with chocolate boxes on one side and novels on the other and a telephone in whichever hand isn't holding a novel or picking a bonbon.'

'It's the best shop in Cannes,' Lily said defensively. 'Of course, Cannes is hardly the intellectual centre of the universe, but there are a lot of books here.'

'I'll lend you an English translation of the complete works of Teresa de Avila,' Marjorie said. 'That is, if you're really serious. That ought to quench your enthusiasm, if anything can. It's in three volumes, a recent translation, scholarly indeed, and bears the Catholic imprimatur. Her *Life* would be worth reading even if you didn't have a special purpose. The other works you can read or not, as you choose.'

'Teresa de Avila,' Lily said moodily. 'It's almost forbidden territory for me.'

She could hear Ricardo's voice saying: *She was a woman of my earth.*

Then, with a flash of perkiness that surprised herself Lily said: 'Ricardo thinks of Teresa de Avila as his own special property, I believe.' This was only the second time she had ever pronounced his name to another person since the beginning of their relationship; it gave her a curious thrill and she imagined that it had been accompanied by a blush, a genuine nineteenth-century blush. 'But for that very reason it is probably the exact book I should have. I do thank you, Marjorie. When can I come and get it?'

Marjorie contemplated her steadily.

'I'm afraid I envy you, Lily,' she said. 'Is envy one of the seven deadly sins or isn't it? I think it is. Am I turning green?'

'Not in the least. You're looking exceptionally well. I love your hat.'

'A hat,' said Marjorie, 'can never be any better than the face under it. Well, if you'll wait until I pick out a couple of detective stories I'll take you home with me now and give you Santa Teresa. There may be something else in my stodgy but useful library that could suit your purpose. That is, if you're footloose just now.'

Marjorie poked about among the English and French thrillers stacked along another table. Lily stood still and watched her—the clever, clever woman, the woman who had never at any time been required to depend upon a man for her livelihood, the woman who could write books which people were willing to buy. Marjorie must be, Lily supposed, of the 'upper classes', as they say in England, which used to mean a minimum of five or six hundred pounds a year as underpinning, plus the legacies

growing more numerous with every year as time passed and the mortality amongst aged aunts increased. This, and the gift of the story-teller, along with some talent for the analysis of human emotion, made Marjorie a fortunate creature, whether she had sandy hair and freckles or not. Lily's fortunes were of another kind.

'Come along,' said Mrs. Wogan. 'We'll pay for these and go. I've got the car here and I'll send you back down the hill in it.'

'Did it ever occur to you, Marjorie, that you're lucky?'

The Englishwoman slowed her step to look down at Lily—a swift, penetrating look.

'Now what's the matter?' she asked. 'How am I lucky?'

'Because you can make your own way, absolutely alone and unaided, and everything you have is truly yours.'

'Even if true, it's no fun,' Marjorie declared. 'I'd much rather be a clinging vine, provided I had something to cling to.'

They reached her car and got in.

'Who was Wogan?' Lily asked. 'I've often wondered. Do you mind . . . ?'

'Lord, no,' Marjorie said, settling back in her corner. 'He was a nice chap but he was gathered to his fathers fifteen or sixteen years ago. Not at all the sort of man you might expect me to marry. He was a guardee.'

'Aren't you just a little—just a little heretical,' Lily asked, 'for a guardee?' She was amused at the thought of Marjorie married to a guardsman; it was more improbable than anything that had ever happened to her. 'What did you talk about with him?'

'We didn't talk,' Marjorie answered. 'At least he didn't. I'm unable to hold my tongue for long, as you know. But he was a sweet creature. I'll show you a photograph

if you want to see it. But I must say Cedric—that was his name, if you can believe it—doesn't bear much relation to Teresa de Avila. Tell me, do you go at everything in this same way?

'What way?'

'Oh, you know—studying it up, cramming.'

'Well,' said Lily, in a mood for frankness, 'just to give you an idea, I studied the *Almanach de Gotha* when I first began to meet its inmates in Europe. When I first lived in London I bought a Whitaker and memorized the rules for titles, official and hereditary. I'm one of the few Americans who don't get them all mixed up, to this day.'

'That's the only sensible way to do it,' Marjorie said approvingly. 'I do things like that in a simple, professional way, because I have occasionally to write about them. It's amazing that you should have taken the trouble. However, I've been well aware for a long time that you're an intellectual woman by nature, Lily. It's queer because you certainly don't look like it. Most intellectual women seem to check their bodies at Paddington Station before they go out into the world.'

'My body,' said Lily demurely, 'has served me better than my intellect.'

'I'll tell you one thing,' Marjorie resumed, after a long silence in which she seemed to be contemplating the floor of the car. 'I'd really rather have had a beautiful body and face like yours than my brains, such as they are. Brains in a woman frighten men. Beauty never fails to attract them, unless it's one of those icy brands we sometimes run into. If I were not myself rather susceptible, in a mild way, this might make no difference—I have all sorts of compensations. But beauty I never had, not a trace of it, and I regret that. How's Ricardo?'

'He's all right,' Lily said. Then quite unnecessarily, she

explained: 'It's on his account that I want to read something of Spanish Catholicism.'

'Thanks,' Marjorie murmured, turning her light eyes in Lily's direction. 'What did you think I thought? Yes, of course, I once very nearly lost my head over Ricardo, that's true. But that was long ago and in another country, and besides, the wench is dead. Are you happy?'

'I don't know,' Lily said truthfully. 'I really don't know. Sometimes I am and sometimes I am not.'

'Hell, isn't it?' Marjorie remarked, and lapsed again into silence.

At the villa on the hill they went straight to Marjorie's library and workroom, a long room at the back of the house which guests normally did not see. It had shelves on three sides and many windows on the fourth. Lily exclaimed over it, not because she admired it as a room, but because she admired the uses to which it was put. Marjorie went to the shelves and fetched the three volumes of Teresa de Avila.

'Wondrous, wondrous woman,' she said absently, leafing through the first volume.

'Ricardo calls her "a woman of his earth", do you know?' Lily said.

'No, I didn't know, but she is,' Marjorie answered. 'But what's to be done with such people? They cause trouble. Spain has had its share. I've got some creatures for lunch. Do you want to stay?'

'No, indeed, I'll go at once if I may. And if you think of anything else I should read, please tell me. I do thank you, Marjorie. You are kinder than I deserve.'

'I'm an amiable old trout when I'm not crossed,' Marjorie asserted. 'Give Ricardo my love.'

CHAPTER TWELVE

THUS BEGAN Lily's short course in Spanish Catholicism. She found Teresa immensely difficult to read, not because of the words themselves but because of the unfamiliarity of the ideas. Sometimes she had to read a sentence three or four times over to get even a glimmer of the meaning. Some of it seemed like sheer insanity, and most of it had no application that she could imagine to the life of men and women in the existing world. Yet she persevered, since it was her nature to do so, and once in a while was rewarded by a glow of comprehension—a glow which seemed not inside herself but afar off, like a light seen through a series of caverns.

She had not intended to tell Ricardo anything about it, but they met almost every night and it became difficult to refrain. She seldom allowed anything else to take the place of her evenings at the Bodega Malagueña, and he was absent only twice during this time, because of what he secretively called 'meetings'. It was by simple chance that she quoted Teresa de Avila to him one evening and he stood very still in front of the fire, looking at her.

'Are you reading Santa Teresa?' he asked. 'Or have you read Santa Teresa?'

'Yes, I have been reading the *Life*,' she answered. 'Marjorie has a new translation. She lent it to me.'

He waited a long time before speaking again.

'Why are you reading it?' he asked.

'Rico, you know why. There is so much about you that I can't understand. I am willing to try, but I don't know where to begin. You're outside my experience altogether.'

'I am very far from being a saint,' he said wryly. 'I doubt if I am even a Catholic in the ordinary sense. My own people regard me as an atheist, an irreligious maniac, something of that kind.'

'I don't expect Teresa de Avila to reveal anything to me about you. I know better than that. I only expect her to reveal something about what it was that brought you forth, that made you, that gave you your characteristic shape of mind, of soul.'

'It's hopeless,' he said. Somehow he seemed displeased, unhappy.

'Rico, you must not blame me for wanting to know what it is that makes you so different from me and from everything I have ever known. Whether you are a Catholic or not, it is Spanish Catholicism that has formed you. That is why I want to know something about Spanish Catholicism. I could have tried to find out from some person, some priest or monk or somebody in Cannes, but it wouldn't be the same.'

'It wouldn't be the same anyhow,' he declared. 'You could read all the books that ever were written on earth, and take all the instructions you choose from French priests or English or whatever. It is not a matter of study, of intellectual comprehension. The truth is that we are born what we are—we, that is, in Spain—and every early experience reinforces the iron mould. You can't *learn* Spanish Catholicism. You either are it yourself or you are not.'

She felt baffled and a little afraid.

'I must do what I can,' she said softly. 'You are not easy for me to understand.'

'Oh, *palomita*, why do you want to understand? We are poor unfortunates, we Spaniards born as I was. We carry the weight of a dozen centuries on our shoulders. We are not fit for life as it is lived in less blighted countries. I learned that when I was a Dago at Eton. Sometimes I think that if my parents had not been in the diplomatic service, and living abroad, I might have had a better life—more limited in purview, perhaps, but better for me. I might have grown up in a nuns' school at first and a monks' school afterwards, and then gone on to Salamanca, if necessary, without having a notion of all these things that make the modern world. I might have been proud of my Castilian ancestry—as proud as Cisneros is of his, although I doubt if he has any. *Me cago . . . !*' He began the routine obscenity of Spain and then cut himself short; even though she could not possibly understand it he did not want to say it in her presence. 'You see, dearest Lily, you must see, that to be what I am is either a malady or a curse or both. It is not for healthy humans to understand. Teresa de Avila cannot help you.'

He said all this, not in a rush of words at all, but in a hesitant and almost painful progression of phrases, a little now and a little then, as if it cost a strange effort. She sat silent, pitying that effort but uncertain of its source.

'Don't think too much, don't worry too much, little Lily,' he said more gently. 'I am not worth it. Teresa de Avila was a great woman and a very Spanish woman. Yet nothing that she has to say will tell you why we are what we are.'

'I can't help trying, Rico,' she said with a sigh. 'That's the trouble. I also am what I am. I can't be resigned either to the inevitable or to the incomprehensible. I have to try. It's how I'm made.'

He was gone, then, in another two days, and her anxiety this time was greater than before because some of the things he had said indicated the approach of a crisis. Was he up to something really critical, really dangerous? Was there any way at all in which she could keep him at her side, away from these enterprises of which she still had no exact idea except that they were secret?

And during his absence she also found herself investigating more than ever before the origins of her own structure—why she had, as she had said, ‘to try,’ why she never could resign herself to the inevitable or the incomprehensible. For, after all, if she found his ruling forces, his springs of action, too difficult to understand, the same must be true in the other direction—he must find much of what she valued and obeyed a strange idiom to his mind. Lily Soames, aside from the external image of the rich and beautiful woman from New York living in Cannes, was many other things, states of character and experience superimposed one upon the other in the odd, complex architecture of a human soul.

Thus the rushing of the water in a nearby room would recall to her now, more than ever—especially in those morning hours or half-hours when she was half awake—the kitchen sink in Albuquerque. She remembered in a dreamlike state, and not at all with precise accuracy, scenes of that time when she was in high school and worked in the boarding house as soon as school was over. Her mother had been very proud of Lily—‘my Lily is the brightest girl in her class’—and wanted her to work at books and lessons, but saw no reason why this could not be combined with some hours of very intense work in the kitchen and the dining room. Lily was, indeed, both bright and physically strong: it had done her no harm. Yet the dishwashing remained, after all these

years, as a symbol of the unwanted work, a relic of bondage.

Mrs. McGarrity spoke very lightly of Lily amongst her friends, and much to Lily's embarrassment.

'I don't know where she gets it,' the mother would declare, 'and certainly not from me, but the girl's bright as they come. A in English and A in history and A in geometry—Lawsy, Laws! At her age I didn't know a tenth of what she knows, and I know less now.'

Then there was that awful addition: 'And what's more, she's a good girl, too.'

Lily, squirming with the recollection of certain evening walks in her third and fourth years at high school, sundry episodes at school dances, had found the imputation of 'goodness' somewhat harder to bear. She was not particularly 'bad', at least no more so than anybody else, but she was well aware from the age of fourteen what it was that made her attractive beyond the ordinary to the boys of her acquaintance, and how it happened that she responded, in an instinct of great power and sweetness, to their desire.

How she crowded so much into a few budding years had been forever afterwards an occasion for wonder, that is, when she thought of it. She had worked hard in the boarding house and she had worked hard at her studies, although probably less hard than might have been necessary to a girl less endowed with intelligence. But none of this had precluded the evening walks, the school dances, the visits to the late movie, all the opportunities given her awakening physical being to declare its own laws. When she thought of those years now she was aware that her whole life had been a subsiding and dwindling and general domestication of instincts which, at their first appearance, were of imperious strength. In the dusty New Mexican town, so hot by day and cool-

over-warmth at night, she had flowered fast—roses in the sun, turning this way and that, divulging a fragrance more or less for all comers, or at least for all who were capable of appreciating it.

In this, she thought, her life had progressed on an opposite principle from that of most women she knew or had known in the past twenty years. They went or had gone from restraint to liberty; she had had to learn restraint for herself.

What, she wondered, might have happened to her entire existence if she had never known Steve?

For he was the first person who had been able to hold her at all, concentrate into one relationship the vagrant fragrance of instinct. She had seen him at lunch—the 'new boarder'—with a curiosity no more than usual in such cases: he was much older than herself and hardly spoke to her. She had to pass the plates, collect them, eat her own lunch and rush back to school without dish-washing or further toil. It was only after four o'clock in the afternoon that she had her full quota of work.

But from that night, the first one, she became well aware of Steve's grey-blue eyes following her movements. He spoke little. He was a mechanical inspector of some kind on the Santa Fe railroad and he stayed in the house a week on that first occasion. It was the last night of the week when he asked her to take a walk with him, ending with some ice cream somewhere in the town. He made her a little uncomfortable because he seemed grave, almost solemn, and not a bit like the boys she knew. His face lit up at rare intervals when something amused him, but otherwise he asked her questions and seemed, from the depths of his gravity, to pay extreme attention to her answers. He was gone three weeks, and when he returned he was, from the outset, her declared admirer, asking her to go for walks, to go to the movies, to go to the big

hotel itself and dance with him. He was her lover within the week and had proposed marriage a few days later.

Soberly, wonderingly, years later, Lily considered that marriage. Steve had not appeared to her in the guise of a Lochinvar, and indeed she could not remember any downright romanticism of that kind about him. She had responded wildly to his steely embrace; she lost interest in everybody else, and had indeed never had much in spite of her rather varied experience; she was happy to marry him; but she did not go into the daydream which a girl of her age might have been expected to experience. She was, instead, quite practical: she could not marry until after her graduation from high school, which seemed to her all-important and was only a month away; then she would have to have a little time to get Ma used to the idea; then she must buy some clothes. When at last the day came, at the end of that summer when she was almost eighteen, she had so considered and discussed, arranged, postponed and debated, that the great event came not as a glossy novelty but a progression in logic. Perhaps, she reflected wryly, if anybody had been crude enough to ask and she had been capable of the truth, she might have been unable to declare which was more decisive, her graduation from high school or her wedding.

They went to California for a little tour in Steve's car and then she spent some months with him on his travels for the Santa Fe railroad, living in boarding houses much like Ma's at home in Albuquerque, talking to similar birds of passage and reading books from the circulating library. Her liking for study, for systematic study, had not yet fully developed or was in abeyance just then, and yet she read voraciously, almost every kind of book that could strike a spark of interest from her. Steve called her his little bookworm, his bluestocking and other terms of affectionate abuse, but he was proud to have a wife who,

though young and pretty, spent her idle time on something more than her own fingernails.

They had been married six months before she became aware that he had been married before and possessed a brood of no less than three children. It was a shock which left some shadow of resentment ever afterward—not against Steve, as it happened, but against those unknowns who had a prior claim. It made her more possessive than she might otherwise have been, as if it constituted some sort of threat to her security. But it was at about the same time that Steve revealed his ownership of 'a little strip of land' in Texas, and when she actually saw it for the first time—discovering, on that occasion, also for the first time, how wonderful it was to be an owner of anything, anything at all—he was more than forgiven for his past. She was so childishly delighted over the land in Texas that some months later Steve put it in her name, so that when the oil came (and how it came!) it was technically her own. He always managed the money; she had everything she wanted; she did not have to bother about details; but from the age of twenty she was, by any ordinary standard, rich, and in her own right. It was a splendid transformation for Lily McGarrity, and she resolved even thus early that she would not lose what the gods had bestowed upon her.

Steve was wondrous kind. He was quite ready, at thirty-eight, to stop work for a while and do whatever she pleased, so that their travels began and continued more or less according to her whims. He gave her such a sense of security and instinctive trust as she was never to know with anybody else, and when she insisted on a division of the spoils from 'her' land he accepted only on condition that he should pay all the bills. Eight years later, swiftly, suddenly, in Cairo, he was dead. It was the only real anxiety he had ever caused her, that one week of

hideously sudden pneumonia and extinction. She flatly refused to surrender any part of her own money or of his to that resented past, that prior wife and three children, who did not fail to claim it when he died. It was, above all, *theirs*, his and Lily's—he had never had it before their marriage—and it remained their communal possession. She took pains to see that whatever happened it did not diminish.

Steve, with his light humorous eyes in the lean, dark face, his unchanged native speech and his unalterable habits of clothing and manner, did not keep pace with Lily's rapid development in those years. She did not expect him to do so. It amused and delighted him to see her learning things, to behold her avid interest in every object they saw on their journeys, to catch her industriously studying foreign languages like a schoolgirl; he approved highly; every new accomplishment of Lily's was a feather in both their caps; but Steve himself was content to be as he was, looking forward only—without undue eagerness—to the time when 'all this' would be over and they would go back to Texas again, not for a month or so, but for good and all.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MRS. MCGARRITY had begun to show signs of being ill at ease with her daughter Lily from an early period. The girl was too bright, too receptive to impressions, too quick to learn new ways. There was a suggestion of the hen-and-gosling relationship from at least the first year the girl spent at high school. Mrs. McGarrity had been pretty herself, but never in the least clever, and after her brief marriage to the transient McGarrity—a 'lunger', as they said in New Mexico, who had come west to be cured and was cured of his tuberculosis—she settled down to a life of work, gossip and economy. McGarrity's cure was far from permanent; the curse came back upon him after three years and he was swept away, at first to the desert and then to the grave. Mrs. McGarrity was too busy most of the time even to regret him after the first few months. She had noticed even in him—Tom, she called him—the signs of that bookishness that was to make her so uneasy afterward with Lily. He had been a lawyer back east and lived on the remains of his earnings, but there was little enough left when he died. His widow devoted herself to the visible tasks of the moment and thought no more than nature compelled her to think of either past or future.

Lily's marriage and departure were, oddly enough, a relief to this oddly compounded woman. Most widows of thirty, even with a very small child, would have at

least thought of remarriage. Mrs. McGarrity apparently had no time for such hypotheses, put her small legacy into a boarding house and proceeded to operate it, with much labour and fair success, for the whole period of Lily's growing-up. She had had admirers, two or three of them, during this time, but of a distinctly temporary character. She actually did not think of herself as being at all poor; she thought she was rather well off; and her instant suspicion of any man who showed her attentions 'of that kind' was that he was after her property or her business. The idea that Lily thought them poor was a great shock to Mrs. McGarrity. It came along about in the first year in high school, and was accompanied by a number of phenomena equally incomprehensible. The mother's unease with her own daughter dated from that time, and threw until it seemed a positive liberation—in spite of the dutiful tears—to be separated from her for a while. Mrs. McGarrity was afraid of being thought 'not good enough' for Lily, or 'not good enough' for Lily's friends. She actually liked keeping a boarding house, and always had done so. It was a cheerful, busy life, never dull or lonely, and she had deliberately chosen it. When Lily started sending her cheques from time to time after she had married and gone away, Mrs. McGarrity wanted at first to refuse them. She was well able to care for herself and save a little money besides. She had fewer anxieties, fewer discomforts and discontents, after Lily's departure. There was a Mexican girl to do all the work that Lily once had done, and much more, while Mrs. McGarrity herself was never idle. The suspicion that the boarding house had seemed unpleasant to Lily, or 'not good enough' for her new-found standards, was profoundly disquieting to her mother, although such things had never once been put into words. At fifty she was so thoroughly indentured to her own way of living

that she could hardly bring herself to rejoice over Lily's great good fortune.

'Now it will come,' she thought secretly. 'Now they'll try to make me give up working. I know it. I know it.'

And come it did. First there was a big cheque for Christmas, and then some hints in letters, and then a visit at Easter time.

'There's plenty of money now, Mother,' said Lily. (She had taken to saying 'Mother' rather than 'Ma'.) 'I don't really see why you should go on wearing yourself out in this boarding house. Why don't you take it easy for a while? We're going to Europe. You could come with us, or if you don't like that you could go to California.'

'I don't know anything about Europe except that I wouldn't like it,' Mrs. McGarrity said. 'Mexicans is about all I can stand. And I never did like California. I went there once. I like just where I am and just what I'm doing.'

She was a stubborn woman and would not be moved.

And there she stayed, year in and year out, until she was sixty and had a heart attack. Then she capitulated, but on her own terms. She had saved a good deal of money and it was her own money that she intended to spend in her own way. She travelled a little, into Mexico and California, spent one winter at Santa Fe, and finally returned to Albuquerque to a boarding house not conspicuously different from the one she had herself owned and operated for so many years. Her letters were filled with delighted criticism of the ownership, management, clientele and situation of her present home, but she could not be persuaded to leave it.

'My daughter Lily,' she would say to her fellow-boarders. 'My daughter Lily . . .'

The tone was always one of pride. Lily was something quite wonderful to speak about. The occasional visits were less wonderful. Flickers of affection always came

up, as well as tears at departure, but in truth there was some dead spot at the centre of their relationship, some inequality of give-and-take, some sense in which the old fear of being 'not good enough' had dimmed and stilled the forces of nature. There were innumerable ways in which communication had become almost impossible; their lives had grown too far apart for them to have a genuine language in common, and it apparently seemed almost wicked to Mrs. McGarrity that her daughter should be rich, elegant and beautiful, so much so as to cause great comment on her rare appearances in Albuquerque. This, too, turned into pride afterward.

'My daughter Lily is married to a Mr. Henry Soames, in New York,' Mrs. McGarrity would say. 'I believe he is a member of the Stock Exchange.'

From the way she said this, it might have been the French Academy or the College of Cardinals—a body dignified, grandiose and remote.

Yet when she expired at last, midway in Lily's marriage to Henry Soames, it was found that Mrs. McGarrity had indeed put together a considerable amount of money over the years and had left it all to Lily. She had sold her boarding house to a real estate company at a high price, she had saved from her own earnings for years, and almost every one of Lily's cheques for holidays and birthdays had piled up, untouched, in the bank. In her will she used a tremendous phrase which she must have obtained either from the lawyer who wrote it or from the parson of the Methodist church who had most recently impressed her. 'Mindful of the vicissitudes of human fortune,' was the phrase. It began a sentence in which she said that she realized her daughter had no need of this money, but that the time might come when it would be needed, and that it was all her own. 'Mindful of the vicissitudes of human fortune.'

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NOW, IN the time of the year when the clear, sunny autumn was turning toward winter and all the colours of the coast were clearer and paler than before, Lily thought of her mother, of Albuquerque and of Steve as one might think of personages in an anterior life, forming this one but not connected with it directly. She had become too nervous and thoughtful for the company she had once frequented in Cannes, and during Ricardo's absence she tried above all to make her way through the mystical history of Teresa de Avila. It did not open itself easily, and she varied it with other reading almost at random as she strove to come upon some hint of light upon what seemed murkiest to her. Sometimes she found it in poetry (as in that poem of Baudelaire on the anterior life) sometimes in other things, but most of the time she was unable to get far away from the thought of Ricardo and of the perils he might now be encountering in his personal dark forest. It would have been a relief, she considered, to lose herself in detective stories as Marjorie Wogan did, but it was not possible for her: all that they had to say seemed to be irrelevant.

'But that's the exact point of them,' Mrs. Wogan protested when Lily made this remark to her. 'You goose, don't you see?'

Lily did not see. She thought it was like telling a colour-blind person that it was silly not to be able to distinguish

green from red. She could not read detective stories and she was utterly unable to sit through a film. Romantic novels of the kind Marjorie herself wrote—detailing affairs of the heart as buttressed by a discreet amount of sociology—bored her one-third of the way through and were never finished. She thought the entire upper class of England, which constituted the *dramatis personæ* of these novels, ought to have been annihilated a hundred years ago before it got so watered down to nonsense. She was equally infuriated with the boudoir embroideries of the French. Her clothing, all those dresses and shoes and hats and gloves that had cost so much time and money to acquire, seemed to her ugly fripperies, subject to inexplicable changes beyond her control, but repulsive in their very superfluity. Above all she disliked her hotel in Cannes, and Cannes as a whole, but she could not possibly go away because this time she had no idea when Ricardo might be coming back. He had not known himself.

Standing in front of the long glass and running her hands lightly over the body that had once seemed a consummation in itself, she said: 'And now he may be dead. He may now be dead.'

She saw Cisneros once, twice and three times. It was her instinct to resent even the sight of him, but now it was immediately accompanied by the thought that he always portended Ricardo's return.

Why? Why did she think so? She reflected carefully. It had happened twice, that was all. When he appeared in Cannes, Ricardo came back. Was there any connection? She could not possibly tell. She only knew that he above all others had the power to disturb Ricardo and make his long fingers twitch.

On the first occasion Cisneros passed her in the lobby of the hotel and bowed rather more deeply than was

strictly necessary, without speaking. On the next occasion, the same afternoon, they met in the Croisette and he took off his hat. On the following day at six in the evening he was up on the hill at Marjorie Wogan's house for a cocktail and actually spoke to her—without meaning or purpose, apparently: 'Are you enjoying yourself in Cannes?' She was very nearly speechless for fear of saying the wrong thing. She said, like a child: 'Yes, thank you,' and turned to somebody else. And yet these three meetings gave her an illogical lift of the spirit because something inside of her asserted, with the unreason of instinct, that Ricardo was about to return.

She drove back down the hill, cancelled her dinner engagement, had a bath and dined in her sitting room. At ten o'clock Ricardo telephoned. He was tired, taciturn, but he wanted her to come. They made their usual arrangements and she was downstairs, dressed for the adventure, in half an hour. At her own suggestion they met a good way down the Croisette. She did not want Cisneros to see her going out, but so far as she could tell by a quick look around, he was not in the hotel or outside it. At this hour he would undoubtedly be at some dinner or other, gleaming his toothy smile through the creases of the lemon-coloured face.

To her amazement Ricardo had his car—the same long, stripped-down racing machine in which they had first driven so long, long ago, so long ago as perhaps three months. She had not seen it since.

'Darling,' she said, 'is this wise of you? I thought you thought this car was too—too noticeable to use?'

'It's night now,' he said, 'and people don't notice so much, and it's very dirty, anyhow, so the colour doesn't show. Anyhow, why?'

She was silent. In the open car she shivered; it was by no means cold, but the night air was a little keen.

'Let's go to the Bodega,' she said. 'I'll tell you. I'll tell you now if you like, but don't let it spoil your driving. That man. Cisneros. He is here again.'

Ricardo was impassive. He only drove a little faster.

'I will take you back in a taxicab,' he said.

Then, after a pause:

'Is he in your hotel?'

'I think so. I have seen him there twice, and once at Marjorie's.'

'Did he ask questions?'

'No.'

'This is the kind of place he would come to,' Ricardo said after a while. 'Perhaps it is only to gamble.' He was silent for a little and then added: 'I do not like to be even in the same general neighbourhood with that man.'

She could have said: I felt that he came here for you, because of you, and for that reason alone I was glad to see him. She did not say so because it was eminently irrational and he could not have been expected to understand that this Cisneros, this bird of ill omen, was in some happy way a presage of Ricardo's own return. It had proved to be true: but how could she justify such a statement without increasing the alarm he obviously experienced?

On the next day he took her for a picnic up into the hills. It was a cool, mother-of-pearl day, the kind of day Cannes has in December, and they had a basket of food with Alella wine. The hills and the sea were in their winter pallor. In the rocks on the edge of an olive grove ('It might be Spain,' he said) they had their lunch and the brown-red rock reflected such light and heat as the sun bestowed. He began to ask her about her life before he had known her. This was not the first time, but now, because she had thought so much about it during the

past ten days, she told him more than before. Her narrative flowed freely, with real freedom, until he said, frowning: 'This Steve. This *Tejano*. I do not like him.'

'Oh, don't be foolish, Ricardo! It was long ago. You never knew him.'

'I do not like him.'

She thought afterward that her love for Steve must have been true—true enough to be seen through the words, the story told years later. Otherwise, why did he frown so fiercely and declare so strongly? There was a matter of instinct to be considered. Ricardo was not in the very least jealous of Mr. Henry Soames, a living man and an actual *prétendant*. He was indubitably jealous of Steve, who had been dead these twelve years. The only reason could be that in her own story she revealed a truth half-forgotten, half-realized, the truth of a love long past. Now, at forty, she was beginning to know the strangest of realities, the reality realized after it was no longer real. Perhaps she had been deceived by others, by the legend that encased her—'that Mrs. Soames'—into thinking that she had never felt the weakness of human love. She had always believed herself to be iron and steel so far as her relations with others were concerned. She knew now, from Ricardo, and through him from Steve, that this was not true and had probably never been true at any time. Most of what she had taken to be hardness and shrewdness on her own part had been above all good luck. Could she truthfully say to-day that if Steve had been penniless she would not have loved him just the same? She could not. Remembering, remembering . . .

'Ricardo,' she said one night in their room at the Bodega, 'you are wrong to be so harsh about Steve. So, so—I must say the word—jealous of a dead man. Because in fact he was rather like you. You are rather like him. Oh—oh—please—so very different! He was a *Tejano*,

as you say. He had not been at Eton.' He squeezed her naked shoulders violently but she went on. 'He wore what you would call vulgar clothing. He could not speak the King's English. He differed from you in many, many ways. But he had your same strength, your hard line.'

Nothing that she could say about Steve would mitigate his hostility toward the idea of the vanished Texan, the creator (practically speaking) of this, his Lily.

'I do not like him,' he said.

She grew faint with fear at the thought of his next departure. He had made it quite plain that this time it might be extremely dangerous, that something quite definite was afoot, that it was no longer a matter of planning or plotting, but of doing. She still knew nothing but she was preternaturally afraid, and probably for the first time in her relatively unshadowed life. What she feared above all was not his death, which seemed to her almost an impossibility, but his elimination from her own existence. If he succeeded in what he was about to undertake she felt or even knew that he would never return. This seemed to her not only a defeat—as she would have regarded it quite frankly a month before—but also an unbearable sorrow, a thing not to be borne. She tried very hard to conceal her obsession from him but it was not always possible.

'This time,' she said, 'this time, my darling, it seems final. If you do what you want to do I shall not see you again.'

'If I do not do what I want to do,' he said, 'I shall not see you again.'

She wept.

'Whatever happens,' she said at last, 'I am the one who loses.'

'*Palomita.*'

At one given moment, fiercely in the darkness, he said to her:

'Between Cerbère in France and La Cervera in Spain there is a tunnel. That is the place. There is where all our destinies will be resolved, and soon.'

'Why, why, why, Ricardo? Rico, why should my life and yours be resolved by a tunnel I've never heard about in all my life? I hate tunnels. It sounds horrible. Tell me you will not go there.'

'I will go there.'

'If you get what you want you will be gone from me.'

'If I do not get what I want I shall be dead.'

'Oh, that I don't believe! You're the most living human being I've ever seen. I love you, Ricardo.'

'I love you, Lily.'

Her breasts grew rounder and softer and her hazel eyes grew gentler during these days, because she was physically replete, satisfied, fulfilled. But the anxiety at the core was never silenced. There were bitter moments when she could not restrain herself and he grew even more aquiline, sharp and torn away from her. She could not avoid words he disdained—*permanecer*, the Spanish word that obsessed her, was one. She even spoke of marriage occasionally, although she knew it was the most forbidden word of all. She was ravaged by the fear of the next departure.

The day came suddenly, as always before, without a moment's warning: 'I go.' She had a frantic five minutes with him, just before noon after his telephone call. 'Wait for me,' she had said on the telephone. 'I am coming down there.' He was doubtful; he did not want her to come; he was supposed to leave at once; but he would wait.

She made a last effort, without believing herself in any chance of success. He looked so hard, so resolute, that

she could not break him down even in their familiar room.

‘I am sorry, Lily,’ he said. ‘It is not easy. I must go at once.’

She clung to him but he went just the same, leaving her in the room that was now more familiar to her, in the most intimate sense, than any other she had ever known.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FOR TWO days Lily was almost stupefied with grief. It seemed to her now that her whole triumphant existence had been a mere apprenticeship for this disaster. She would have liked to talk to the old Duquesa de Balbuena, and to her alone. Those wise blue eyes had warned her of something deeper and wider than words alone could indicate. Teresa de Avila was of no avail in this moment. Lily ceased to read or to go out. She received a letter from Henry, but it lay for many hours unopened on her desk in the sitting room. When she had the energy to open it she read:

'Dearest Lily, I must go home soon. I have been making excuses to myself and others for staying on here, hoping that you would send for me. I have the feeling that you are not happy. I also have clung to the notion that maybe in spite of everything you will reconsider and come back to me. I am perhaps too old and certainly too stupid for you, but at least I love you. We could rearrange our lives in America in any way you liked, live your life rather than mine. I know I gave you something of an overdose of the country, and of my relatives and friends, and the general Soames atmosphere which must have seemed unbearably stuffy to you. That could all be changed. I am willing to give up everything of the kind—and how willing!—if you'll do it. We could live a good deal of the time in Europe if you preferred. You

know how I hate hotels, but I'm quite willing to live in them for the rest of my life if you'd rather have it that way. The only thing that weighs much is whether I can make you happy or not, and whether you'll let me try. I'll wait a while longer, perhaps a week, hoping to hear from you, and if I don't, I'll have to go home. Please think if it would not be better for us to go home together. Love, Henry.'

She read it almost absent-mindedly, said 'Dear Henry' under her breath, and stuck it into a book. The book was one of the volumes of Teresa de Avila.

It was on the evening of that day, as she sat desolately looking at the sea near her circular balcony, that Marjorie Wogan came in. She was announced from downstairs and Lily told Françoise, with almost perfect indifference, to let her come up.

'You know,' Mrs. Wogan said, her clever face twisted into an expression of concern, 'I've been wondering what has happened to you, so I thought I'd better come and find out. I'm not being curious, dear—not at all—and please don't tell me anything. I only notice that one sees you nowhere at all now, and for two or three weeks past. I'm hoping you aren't feeling—how shall I say—too much of anything. Don't mope, Lily. That's what I mean, perhaps. Is that officious of me?'

'No,' Lily said with her usual composure, 'it's very kind. It's kind of anybody to care about what becomes of me.' She realized that this sounded a distinct overtone of self-pity, and aroused herself. 'Tell me all the gossip, Marjorie,' she said more vivaciously. 'I haven't been out because I've been just a little seedy lately—nothing serious. What's going on?'

'Oh, nothing much,' Marjorie said airily. 'Another cabinet crisis, but I suppose you read the papers. Here in Cannes everything is exactly the same. I sometimes

think it is the most changeless place under the sun. I'm thinking of a little tourist expedition to Africa, just sightseeing, you know. You wouldn't like to come with me? Biskra, then Marrakech, something of that sort.'

'It sounds wonderful,' Lily responded more naturally. 'You know what a sightseer I am. But I hardly feel capable of moving just now.'

'Maybe that will pass,' Marjorie said equably. 'I often get the pip myself, as who wouldn't in a life like this, but I notice that it does have a way of vanishing after a while. I'm not going right away. Just think it over and let me know.'

'I haven't stirred out of these rooms for two days,' Lily said. 'The idea of a journey to Africa is especially startling under those circumstances.'

'You ought to get out. I said before: don't mope. How are you getting on with Teresa de Avila?'

'I give up,' Lily said. 'I really do give up. You may as well take the books back, my dear, with my sincere thanks for lending them to me. I'll never understand Spanish Catholicism, I suppose. Anyhow, I certainly do not understand Santa Teresa.'

'Well, she isn't easy,' Mrs. Wogan said judiciously. 'I'm an old hand at books, as you may imagine, but it took me some years to get through Santa Teresa with any real comprehension.'

'Some day I may try again, but not now.'

Lily crossed the room and brought back the three volumes of Teresa de Avila. Normally the most collected of women, she did not now remember that Henry's letter from the Ritz in Paris was stuck into one of these books. She put them on the table beside Marjorie with an indifference amounting almost to abstraction.

'It's unlike you to give up anything,' Marjorie re-

flected. 'You really are in the dumps, aren't you? My poor dear, I don't know what to suggest since you don't read detective stories. I might recommend a thoroughly good jag but I realize you don't drink alcohol either. One thing I do believe is that you should get out. Whatever's wrong, it can't be helped by cooping yourself up. See here: I've got a luncheon party to-morrow for about a dozen people. Some are middling bores and some are great bores but there are a few who might enliven you. Why don't you come?'

Lily considered the notion for a moment.

'I'm not much inclined to go anywhere,' she confessed. 'You are right in that. But perhaps I should. Are you sure there's room for me?'

'Oh, there's always room. We just put the food on the table and help ourselves and wander about. If it's warm enough we sit outside and if it isn't we adorn the chambers. I'm not suggesting it as any whirl of gaiety, but just to make a break.'

'Who's coming?'

'A couple of French trouts,' Marjorie said, and then named some names, including that of the celebrated painter who had been present when Lily first met Ricardo. 'Also, I've asked Cisneros,' she added.

Lily looked up.

'Cisneros?'

'Why not?'

'I only wondered. I didn't know he was still here.'

'In your very own hotel, dear. I don't like him much, but he has more to say than a lot of people.'

Lily's fingers twisted in her lap. Why did she want to see Cisneros? Because he was the harbinger of Ricardo's return? That could hardly be: the man had not gone away and returned, but had simply stayed.

'Marjorie, has Cisneros been here all along, for these

past three or four weeks, that is? He came down on the plane from Paris with me, whenever that was.'

'Oh, I suppose he's been back to Paris since then—in fact I know he has. But he came down again yesterday or the day before, because I saw him last night in the Casino.'

'Does he gamble?'

Marjorie stared.

'Of course he gambles,' she said 'Practically everybody who goes to the Casino gambles to some extent. I don't think he over-indulges. Just a little flutter now and then, rather discreetly.'

'I've heard,' Lily said vaguely, 'that his parents were great gamblers.' Then, with sudden resolution: 'I'll come to lunch, with pleasure.' And she looked as if she meant it. Her spirits were rising because she had the same irrational feeling as before, that if Cisneros had returned, Ricardo must be about to return also.

'Now, that's a good girl,' Marjorie said approvingly. 'Chin up. In celebration of your recovery I'll have a cocktail now if you're prepared to offer me one. I've been working all day—a wretched book that won't go right—and I've earned it.'

When Mrs. Wogan left she took with her the three volumes of Teresa de Avila.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LILY DRESSED with unusual deliberation for lunch on the hill the next day. She did not greatly care what she looked like, but the event had come to assume importance in her mind as relating somehow to Ricardo. Moreover, in her present lassitude, when almost no activity seemed possible, the mere details of clothing and decorating her own body took up time, gave her something to do. A phrase she had read of Tolstoy came into her head: 'to know sorrow without being sad'. Who could know sorrow without being sad? The saints, perhaps, and Lily was certain of one thing at least, that she was not a saint.

The day was quite warm once the sun came out, although the winter colours kept their cool tints on mountain and water. In spite of everything, Lily's resilience came to her aid as she drove up the hill and she felt able to meet the world. Marjorie was right, after all: it did no good to mope, except that there seemed to be times (a discovery in itself) when moping alone was possible. She had learned much in three months, she considered, and was none the wiser for it. Her appearance, at all events, as she had carefully verified at every point, had not suffered. That was something; and she made her entrance to Marjorie's luncheon party with a fair approximation of her old confidence.

There must have been sixteen or eighteen people there,

not a dozen, and of these Lily knew possibly half. Others were visitors from London, from Paris—Marjorie's range was wide—and then there was the lemon-faced Cisneros, who bowed ceremoniously and said nothing. Lily was aware of him from the moment she entered the long room, over the garden, where the guests were having cocktails or fruit juices. The long windows had been opened and some of them took their drinks outside to wander under the trees. Cisneros did so, not long after Lily had come in, but she was able to see him out of the corner of her eye as she talked to others. He was discoursing with obvious fluency to a haggard American woman in an Ascot hat as they stood by the terrace wall. Lily had never heard him talk—had never wanted to—and wondered now what it was he could embroider at such length. She overcame an unruly impulse to go out there and find out; it would not be at all polite to the two Frenchmen—one of them the famous painter—who were doing their best to amuse her. They would not have had trouble doing so a few months before, and she tried to conceal from them the melancholy fact that she was not easily amused to-day.

Lunch was good, but it lasted a long time. Lily, sitting in a corner with her two Frenchmen, saw Cisneros come and go. She had no idea with respect to him, at least no new idea. She knew merely that every time she saw him she saw Ricardo soon afterwards. She also knew that Ricardo was afraid of him, or at least uneasy about him. That was all. He got food and took it outside to the haggard American woman, and then came back and got more. He was ritualistically courteous. She wondered what might be behind that citronized mask and those elaborate manners. If she had any opportunity, any at all, she would speak to him this time. She had no notion of what to say, and above all no plan, but she experienced a

strong wish to speak to him to-day. He seemed to bring Ricardo back by the mere act of being; she would have given a good deal to know why.

In some shift of arrangement toward coffee time Lily found herself for a moment alone with Marjorie. Both of the Frenchmen had gone to get coffee.

'I was looking at one of those books you returned to me,' Marjorie said, 'and this fell out.' She opened the bag that hung at her wrist and took out Henry's letter. It was without its envelope—just a sheet of Ritz Hotel paper folded once. 'I looked at it because I thought it might be mine. I often put things in books and forget.'

Lily accepted it and smiled.

'Did you read it, dear?' she asked.

'I'm flesh and blood. I'll admit I glanced through it. And really, you know . . . Lily, don't you think . . . ?'

'No,' said Lily. 'I don't think. That time has gone. I haven't even missed this letter. Do you think me callous?'

'Not callous, perhaps,' said Marjorie, with a touch of envy, 'but perhaps busy.'

The Frenchmen came back with coffee and she drifted away to see to the needs of her guests. Lily put Henry's letter into her small Venetian bag and snapped it shut decisively. If she were to talk to Cisneros it would have to be soon. She kept him under a discreet watch for the next fifteen minutes. The guests were leaving. She got up as if to leave, too, and said good-bye to her Frenchmen. With skill and an excellent sense of the time consumed by such manœuvres she made her way to the hall, pausing here and there to speak to one acquaintance or another. Cisneros did not come. He was still standing by the terrace wall in the garden. She turned swiftly, traversed the room and went out into the garden.

'M. de Cisneros,' she said, 'I've dropped a cigarette case somewhere. I wonder if it could have been here?'

If he had been at all attentive he must have known that she had not set foot in the garden from the time she arrived. No matter: any pretext would do.'

'Madame,' he said, bowing, and with his thin lips somewhat askew, 'shall we institute a search?'

Lily was not more than average in height—certainly not a tall woman—but as she stood there facing him she could look levelly into his eyes. They were strange eyes. She could not discern in the least what meaning that very straight look might possess. His eyes were dark but mixed, part brown, part black, partly some indeterminate colour, and they narrowed in a strange manner.

'It doesn't matter much,' she said, suddenly short of breath. 'It was a thing of no value. May I ask . . . ?'

'Anything you please, Madame.'

'Why do you come so often to Cannes?'

'It pleases me,' he said, smiling askew. 'It also interests me. Why do you stay? You are, I am told, an inveterate traveller. This is not the season here. It is, in fact, between seasons.'

'So it is,' she said, as if thinking of something else. Then fixing him with her own direct gaze, she asked: 'Where do you suggest that I should go? To Cerbère or to La Cervera?'

The words were drawn out of her and she heard them with a shudder of astonishment. There was a perceptibly prolonged silence, while he seemed to control her with his strange eyes. Then he bowed.

'We have not known each other long, Madame,' he said. 'I have not the honour to understand you. Adieu.'

He walked away from her, into the room, across the hall to Marjorie, and away.

She sat down on one of the garden chairs. With his departure all her organism seemed to have grown flaccid and weak, with small nerves or muscles jumping uncontrollably through her whole body. What had she

said and why had she said it? The words had passed through her lips but she had not intended to say them. They were gone now forever and could not be recalled. She looked through the dip in the trees to the pale blue sea below. What had she done? The trembling increased; she did not think she could get up from this chair; her feet would not sustain her.

Marjorie came out into the garden.

'Well, they've all gone, and that's that,' she announced, sitting down. 'Goodness, Lily, what's the matter? You look as if you'd seen a ghost.'

Lily could not speak. Marjorie reached over, took one of her hands and felt its tremor.

'Sit quiet and let me get you a brandy at once,' she said. 'Don't move.'

She was swift to go and come again with a liqueur glass brimming and a tumbler full of water besides.

'Drink this and drink all of it,' she commanded.

Lily could not hold the glass up without spilling it. Marjorie took it in her own firm hand and held it to Lily's lips until it was all consumed and then did the same with the glass of water.

'Now sit still and don't try to speak,' she said. 'In a moment or two you can come inside and lie down if you like.'

Lily was thinking: she attributes this to one of the ills of women. A malady most incident to maids. Perhaps she is right. Perhaps she is right.

The brandy stilled the trembling after a little while, but the feeling of incredulous horror took longer for its departure. She could not look at Marjorie, but kept her gaze fixed on the stone table between them until the controls began to come back. Then she looked up and tried to smile, although she was aware that it was a poor effort.

'I'm sorry, Marjorie,' she said. 'I felt very faint.'

'There's a fire in my study,' Mrs. Wogan said. 'I know it's a warmish day but you ought to be really warm after a thing like that. Come along now. Can I help you?'

Marjorie did help her to get up but after a few steps Lily felt her own strength again and walked unaided into the study. There she sat by the fire for a while in a big leather chair and had another brandy. Never in her life had she consumed two brandies after lunch. Marjorie was discreet and almost silent; she went away for a while and came back.

'If you want to go to bed here you can,' she said. 'Otherwise I'll send you back to the hotel when you feel up to it. My car is here.'

'You're very good,' Lily said. 'It's all my fault. I should never have spoken to that man at all.'

'What man?'

'Cisneros. What is he—a mesmerist?'

'Oh, I don't think so,' Marjorie said. 'He may have a touch of the evil eye, which is why he practically never goes back to Spain. But, after all, his late lamented sovereign had the same.'

Lily shuddered.

'Surely you don't believe in such things?'

'No,' said Marjorie judiciously. 'However, I understand how superstitious peasants might think that anybody with queer eyes . . . Oh, I don't know. But they do believe it in Italy and Spain. I've heard that the legend attaches to Cisneros in his own country. Nobody here pays any attention. I'm sorry I ever spoke of it. It's just babble, dear.'

'Well, he does have very strange eyes,' Lily said slowly. 'That is true. I never noticed it before. But I never looked straight into his eyes before. I wish I hadn't to-day.'

'Never mind,' Marjorie comforted. 'We all have a

touch of the vapours now and then. Do you feel better now?’

‘I think I feel quite well enough to go home,’ Lily hazarded, ‘although the remedy may have been a little dangerous too. Such whopping big brandies, and two of them!’

‘You needed it. And if you aren’t well, will you telephone, please? Or send for that nice man in Paris, better still. I wish I had a devoted swain awaiting the summons. Have you got a good doctor, dear? If not I’ll send you one. With such a bedside manner! It’s worth while being ill. Are you sure you’re able to go?’

All the way down the hill, all the way down the hill, and then, perhaps, into the sea . . .

When Lily reached the hotel she did go to bed and send for Marjorie’s doctor. Illness of any kind was rare with her, and such a cataclysm of the nerves had never happened. She was afraid that when the brandy wore off it would come again, the inexplicable tremor, making her feel as if she had no authority over her own body any more. The doctor, bearded and affable, with a mellifluous flow of exquisite French, came about an hour later and examined her briefly. He had little silver hammers and a tiny pencil light which he flashed into her eyes. He seemed to think there was nothing much wrong—sleep and rest would take care of it—and he left various sedatives or narcotics with Françoise with very precise directions both spoken and written. These, apparently, were eminently efficacious, because shortly after her dinner tray had been removed Lily drifted off into a sleep from which she did not wake for twelve hours. As she floated into the billowing darkness she had a vague impression of Steve’s face and heard the words, almost it seemed in his voice, ‘to Cerbère or to La Cervera.’

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ON THE following afternoon Lily felt such a recrudescence of strength that she resolved to pretend that nothing had happened. By pretending, she had often observed, one could catch hold of reality somehow, as to a rope, and climb slowly up toward it or into it. How else had she become the 'beautiful Mrs. Soames'? The form came first, or the sketch of the form, and then life filled it in as the will determined. She had always been strong; she could be strong still.

And, after all, she thought with pitiless clarity, what could have been beneath her rash words to that basilisk, Cisneros? The desire above all to have Ricardo come back and stay, never to depart again. *Permanecer*. It was the old obsession. If indeed she had meant anything, that is what she had meant: frustrate if you can the madness of this man so that he will return to me! She did not know even that the words meant anything to Cisneros. She thought they did, and that, no doubt, was what had annihilated her nervous controls for so many hours, and yet it was quite possible that the words had signified nothing. She had never intended to pronounce them. They would have had no meaning to anybody except Cisneros, certainly, and probably none to him. Why, then, quiver? What was done was done.

She looked over her desk and found a number of those nondescript and imprecise invitations which burgeon in a

resort of the idle: a show of paintings, a show of dresses, two or three cocktail parties or 'at homes'. None of them required answers, one way or the other; she could go to what she chose, expected or unexpected. She determined to go out and make the rounds, partly as a discipline and partly to prove to herself that she could do so, that in fact she was not less than she had been before. She made sure of her appearance, of the steadiness of her hands, of the security of her knees and legs; what is more, she put into her ears the big sapphires Henry had given her, which she so seldom wore because of their weight. In the result, at the second cocktail party, she was besought for a dinner party at the Casino, and, dreading the evening alone in her hotel, she went.

Thus it was the next day also, and the next.

At one of these fortuitous gatherings, the purpose of which was no less narcotic than one of Dr. Croisset's drugs, she met Marjorie Wogan.

'You look perfectly beautiful,' said Marjorie, scrutinizing her, 'but your eyes are too big. Bigger than their size. What does Dr. Croisset say? Does he approve of your going out like this?'

'He says I'm all right now,' Lily answered truthfully. 'He did want me to rest a little more, another day or so. But he says that it is quite possible my own room may make me more nervous than all this.'

'All this,' Marjorie observed, 'is pretty awful, but I know what he means. Have you thought any more about that trip to Africa? I might be going in a week or ten days. It would take you out of the treadmill.'

'I don't know anything yet. I must simply wait.'

Marjorie did not inquire why. She seemed to know many things without inquiring. Her age, perhaps, her profession, the security of her personal fortunes, combined with her native intelligence, gave her the moral

autonomy which Lily could not help envying as she envied it at this moment, unaware, or only very imperfectly aware, that the other woman also had her reasons for envy.

At night when Lily came back to the hotel she looked out of the balcony at the sea and at the cold stars. It was then not the 'Latin sea', but the immeasurable, the endless sea, and this its brink, and the stars icily remote from it in the chill of the winter. She had taken to wearing furs every night. When she stood on the balcony, pulling the furs closer, she could feel herself to be on the edge of the world. The silent, empty town at midnight did not contradict her. There she was, Lily Soames, and beyond that the frigid void, the immensity of nothingness. All her life seemed to be behind her ('No more, O nevermore!') and the next step was into that blank zero of cold night. Reason could not subdue the piercing desolation of such a moment. Reason came later, in the warmth of her bedroom, when, with the aid of Dr. Croisset's soothing preparations, she was able to reason herself to sleep.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ON THE fourth morning Marjorie Wogan arrived at the hotel at a few minutes past ten o'clock and went, unannounced, up to Lily's room. She rang at the door insistently and Françoise, a raddled and frightened Françoise, opened to her. She came into the sitting room imperiously and saw at once that the door to the bedroom was firmly shut.

'Tell me quickly,' she said, 'am I too late?'

'Too late?' Françoise echoed stupidly. 'I don't know. Madame is ill.'

'I know. She must be.'

'Such shrieking I have never heard,' said Françoise sullenly. 'Never. And then silence.'

'I tried to get you by telephone to tell you to keep the newspapers away from her,' Marjorie said. 'I did not see them myself until half an hour ago. What happened?'

'Madame rang at nine o'clock. I brought breakfast and the newspapers. She did not look at them for quite a while. It was when she saw them that the attack came on. The doctor—I was going to call the doctor, as he had instructed—but he was already here, at the door. I don't know why.'

'I know,' said Marjorie grimly. 'I telephoned to him the moment I saw the papers. I told him to come here and wait, wanted or unwanted. Good man. Is the doctor in there now?'

'He is there. He has given her an injection and he is watching her now. She is quiet. Perhaps she will sleep. *Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*'

Marjorie had little patience for Françoise.

'You can bear it if she can,' was all she had to say. 'I'm coming back after a while. Tell the doctor I want to see him.'

She turned through the door and down the stairs with some celerity. In the hall of the hotel she went to the porter's desk, wrote out a telegram to Paris, turned it in and paid for it. In her memory was the letter from Henry Soames (obviously it must be Soames, no other) on Ritz Hotel paper. She owed this name and address to Teresa de Avila, since she had never met Henry Soames and did not know he was in Europe.

'If you want to see Lily come immediately on earliest aeroplane,' she had written. 'She is ill.' To this she signed her own name, although she knew it could mean nothing to him. On second thought she appended her address, the villa on the hill.

She stood by the porter's desk in reflection for a minute or so.

'Which is quicker for Paris?' she asked. 'Telephone or telegraph?'

The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs would not have been pleased at the ironic shrug which was her answer.

'*Cela dépend,*' the man said.

She knew of old how much it depended. It depended on circumstances entirely outside her comprehension. She reflected that the only reasonable course was to try both, and asked the man to get the Hotel Ritz in Paris for her. She could await the 'communication', if it ever came, in the lounge over a cup of coffee and another look at those horrifying newspapers.

By some highly erratic variation or sport in the system

she had the Ritz in about twenty minutes, and in another minute Henry Soames was on the telephone.

'My name is Marjorie Wogan,' she said. 'I'm a friend of Lily's, I suppose. You don't know me.'

'I know about you,' he said.

'Good. Believe me, then. She is ill. If I were you I should get into the first aeroplane for Cannes. She does not know I am calling on you. It's my responsibility. But you'd better do it.'

'I will,' he said. 'How ill is she?'

'I don't know. She's had a great shock.'

'Anything to do with—with this horrible business in the papers?'

'Yes. I think so. But hurry.'

'Where can I find you when I get there?'

'I'll meet your aeroplane if you let me know when it arrives.'

She gave him her address and telephone number. He thanked her and was gone, obviously in haste. If he received her telegram at all it would only give him visual confirmation of this voice out of the crackling chaos of the Posts and Telegraphs.

Mrs. Wogan went back upstairs, less agitated than before. She had done what she could. It was no business of hers, really, and yet they had met in her house, Lily and Ricardo, and she was somehow involved. Ricardo! As she thought of him a memory of Barcelona years ago invaded her like a flood and she staggered on the stairs. What does one go through in this life, she thought! What does one go through, and yet survive, and yet go on observing, observing, eternally observing! She climbed the stairs more and more slowly, until they seemed to her like the stairs of life itself, leading to a door—what door?—from which there was no turning back.

Françoise admitted her again to the sitting room.

'Is the doctor still there?'

'*Oui, Madame.*'

'I will wait here until he comes out. Does he know I have been here?'

'I told him.'

'Tell him I will wait for him here.'

She went over to the corner well away from the sea—the corner to which the Duquesa de Balbuena had retreated from the sunlight—and sat there for quite a long time, smoking one cigarette immediately after the other. Her own nerves were none too good, she reflected, although she was most of all filled with sadness. It was a passive emotion, sadness, without violence in it; it had nothing to do with the passion of grief. Well, perhaps all that had been too long ago for grief. She, too, had loved Ricardo, but she was much older now, and she felt the inroads of these years, these swift and pitiless years. Soon the light would begin to fade for her too, and there would be, afterward, the aroma of a few vague regrets plus half a shelf full of books nobody would care to read much longer. She contemplated her own loneliness with a stony and barren realism. It could only increase; it could never grow less. It was like a desert forever encroaching upon the fertile earth around it. The 'compensations'—and she made a wry mouth when that word came to her—were sheer mirage visible only to others. *Da geht sie hin, die alte Marschallin . . .*

Dr. Croisset came out of the bedroom and crossed swiftly to her. He was without his usual professional smile.

'Your friend is suffering from shock,' he said. 'That is about all one can say just now. I have been with her since half-past nine, an hour and a half ago. She is sleeping now because I gave her a strong injection.'

'What were the indications?' Marjorie asked coolly.

She was rather surprised at the ordinariness of her own voice and manner.

'The maid says she screamed very wildly and then grew completely silent. I was waiting here, as you asked me to do, and I went as soon as the maid let me in. She was staring and trembling. She did not speak—in fact she has not spoken yet. But the tremors were unmistakable. I have done what I could. I think she should have a nurse day and night for a while. Before giving her the injection I tried to talk to her. Useless. I doubt if she knew I was there.'

'Will you arrange for the nurses and what ever else is needed?' Marjorie asked. 'I have telephoned to her former husband—divorced—who is now in Paris. He will be here to-day. He will want to talk to you. Give her all the time you can, will you, Croisset? If you cannot come yourself send one of your good men. She has had a great shock, I know.'

'I will take good care, Madame,' he said. 'The unfortunate thing is that this shock, whatever it is, comes on top of that nervous collapse the other day. However, her heart seems strong. She would not stay in bed and rest as I asked her to do.'

'It probably makes no difference,' said Marjorie, getting up. 'I dare say there is nothing I can do here?'

'Nothing. There will be a nurse in a few minutes. I am waiting for her now.'

'Then I shall go home for a telephone call. Thank you, Doctor.'

The telephone call had already come when Marjorie got back to her hill. It was from the Ritz in Paris, saying that Mr. Henry Soames would arrive in Cannes at two-thirty that afternoon. He must have made haste indeed.

The interval passed in an idleness as blank as Marjorie could make it. She had no wish to think. Ricardo's

death, in all the circumstances, was a horror too remote and impersonal for private contemplation; it had passed over into the realm of the great Chinese floods, the drought in the Antipodes, tragic summations apprehended but not felt in the here and now. She had lunch on a tray in her study and arranged flowers afterward. By half-past two she was at the airport to meet Mr. Henry Soames, and then perceived the explanation of his promptness to be that he had chartered an aeroplane for the journey. There was no difficulty in recognizing a single passenger, and even if there had been others Marjorie felt that she could have picked him out—handsome, a little heavy, stooped, very worried.

‘I have my car here, Mr. Soames,’ she said. ‘Will you come with me? I’m Marjorie Wogan.’

‘How is Lily?’ he asked.

‘She’s asleep, or was when I telephoned half an hour or so ago.’

They went out and got into Mrs. Wogan’s car. He had only one smallish bag with him.

‘Thank you for telephoning me,’ he said. ‘I might have guessed something, but I didn’t really know. This man, the one called in the papers Don Ricardo, was he . . . ?’

‘He was the man,’ Marjorie said.

‘I guessed that,’ he said. ‘She never told me his name but from what she said this sounded rather like him. She once said he was mad. I think the idea of storming through a frontier tunnel was the proof of madness.’

‘It might have succeeded,’ Marjorie said. ‘There were plenty of accomplices on both sides. It had all been carefully prepared for many months, I gather. It might have succeeded.’

‘I don’t see how,’ he said.

‘The entire military and civilian structure on the

Spanish side,' she pointed out slowly, 'had been changed at the last minute. Every person. There was some warning—some advance knowledge. Some treachery. Otherwise the train might have gone through, and the seizure of La Cervera would have been the signal for many other revolts in many places. I don't think it's a proof of madness.'

'I don't much care,' Henry Soames confessed. 'That sounds pretty brutal, doesn't it? I'm sorry for all of them—so many deaths. It seems useless. But the effect on Lily is what concerns me. She likes people to think, as they generally do, that she feels nothing, that she is very strong.'

'Nobody could be so strong.'

'Tensions—she was filled with unsuspected tensions,' he declared, giving proof, she thought, of more perception than might have been credited to him at a glance. 'Such a nature blows up sometimes. She has a good doctor?'

'The best I know about here. Just now it's simple shock, I think, and he is probably going to try to get her to sleep through it. What makes it a little worse is that she had something of the sort—some kind of nervous collapse or shock of that kind—four days ago. Then this morning, this came.'

'With the morning papers?'

'Yes. I tried, as soon as I saw them, to forestall this—to get the maid to keep them away from her—but it was too late. Then I called you. It seemed the only sensible thing to do. I don't know whether I had any right to do so or not.'

'I'm glad you did. I'll do what I can.'

After a long silence he asked: 'Did you know Don Ricardo?'

'I did. Years ago in Spain. He met Lily in my house.'

'It was a terrible way to die, I suppose,' Soames reflected aloud, 'since it was in a general failure of great plans. He may have thought death a fair price for success but not for failure.'

'That's it,' Marjorie agreed. 'From the moment the train reached La Cervera he must have known that he had been betrayed. From then on it was more like a massacre than a battle. They were all killed, it seems. We don't know every detail—nothing comes from La Cervera, only from Cerbère on this side. But I know Ricardo. He must have been ready for anything.'

Soames fell into a meditative silence which she had no wish to disturb. After a while he asked questions about Lily's doctor, her maid, her heart and her general condition, pondering each answer for its possible meanings so that Marjorie felt the paucity of all this information. What did they know, anyhow? The axe falls, and a human organism is to some degree shattered, but nobody knows how or why, or with what ultimate result. The car reached the hotel at last and they went upstairs.

'Madame is sleeping,' said Françoise. 'The nurse is there.'

That was the kind of information, flat and empty of content.

'May I look at her?' Henry asked.

'I will ask the nurse.'

Henry went into the bedroom for a few minutes and came out again, looking a little dazed.

'You'd better get a room at this hotel,' Marjorie advised him. 'I suppose you'll want to stay until she gets through it. Françoise can call you when the doctor comes back.'

'Yes. You're right,' he said. 'That is what I should do. I'll get a room and then I'll come back here and wait for the doctor.'

'You have my telephone number,' Marjorie reflected aloud. 'It's in Lily's book, it's on my telegram, and the hotel operators here know it. You can call me if you need me. I think I may as well go home. I can't help you much at the moment.'

'You've already helped. Enormously. I am deeply grateful.'

The one thing she did not want to do, she felt with certainty, was to sit there hour after hour while the poor man waited for news of his errant beloved. And what news! Madame is sleeping. It would be far better to go home and try to work, read, write letters, do accounts, pay bills, anything reasonable, anything to keep the hand steady and the mind centred on a task. For, worst of all this, to Marjorie, was a growing fear that beneath it there might be something else, something not to be contemplated for a moment. In the impossible region of plot and conspiracy, blood and despair, all the traffic of darkness came to life and peopled the imagination with phantoms. There had been a betrayal of some sort (she realized it as she said it aloud an hour ago) and there might be revenges incalculable. These were thoughts to be expelled, since there was no limit to their expansion; one led to another; all belonged to the dark and the unknown. Henry Soames, fortunately, would not be troubled with such imaginings: he had only Lily's present condition to preoccupy him. She took his hand, wished him luck, and went resolutely up her hill again to work.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE DARING attempt at the Pyrenean tunnel provided the newspapers with elements of astonishment for several days. There were so many stories, so many people living and dead who seemed to be involved, so much recrimination across the frontiers and between parties, that the dimensions of the failure, its bloody catastrophe, began to be somewhat obscured in an angry debate over responsibilities. Marjorie Wogan read it all, setting off the contradictions against each other in an effort to determine what had, in fact, taken place. This she would no doubt have done even if she had known nobody concerned; it was her habit of mind, arising from or giving rise to her profession itself; but it was more difficult than usual in the tumult now released. Clearly Ricardo had been the active chief of an enterprise to which thousands of others were also committed. He had commanded the action, but what lay behind the action grew more and more obscure as opportunity was offered for conspirators, criminals, patriots and heroes (for there seemed to be everything in it) to scatter and vanish. Substitution of Ricardo's men, both French and Spanish, for the regular authorities on this side of the border had been proved, and there were wholesale arrests. The same thing was to have taken place at the other end of the tunnel but was frustrated by an exactly opposite substitution some hours before the act. The

train, with its cargo of determined men, emerged from the tunnel into a reception of concentrated fire instead of the expected collusion. No wilder plot and no bloodier failure had been known in all these troubled years, but it seemed to Marjorie, working her way through the maze, that it had indeed come near to success. It was impossible to tell—it would probably never be known—how many other outbursts had been set to occur on this signal, but if it had been possible to seize La Cervera they would have occurred. That seemed to be conceded even in the brief, cautious communiqués from Madrid. It was a conspiracy much wider and deeper than the mere daredevil seizure of a tunnel, but it had all centred upon that harebrained scheme and fell to nothing with it. The plot had been betrayed by somebody, somehow, so that now it would never be possible to guess with any accuracy what might have followed if it had been carried out as planned. It was a might-have-been, an 'if', and it depended upon political convictions or prejudices whether these putative results were estimated as great or small. The amount of collusion amongst French and Spanish railway workers, the degree to which even public officials had been implicated, were an amazed conjecture. At first it seemed on an appalling scale, and then, for the obvious reasons of political order, it was minimized and even to some extent denied. In another week or so, Marjorie thought, so many trails would have been covered over, so much deception and protective coloration would have been lavished upon the job, that it would be beyond human skill to extricate all the facts. Only the main ones, the action itself, remained. Arrow-like it had fallen and failed, arrow-straight it remained.

What are the heart's reasons? This she wondered. The heart has its reasons which reason knows not. All right. But what heart's reason made her fear the results? This

was already a great catastrophe, a tragedy if you wished to call it that—a tragedy certainly for the hundred and fifty or sixty or seventy men (estimates differed) who had been killed, or for their widows and orphans eating the bread of grief. Why, then, did she fear? The worst had come. What remained? Darkness, darkness in the path of the sun. Something the heart declared that the mind rejected, and she knew that the heart must be right.

During these three or four days she talked to Henry Soames on the telephone and once or twice she went down to the hotel to see if there was anything she could do for Lily. There was, of course, nothing. Madame is sleeping; Madame is resting; Madame is awake but can see nobody. Madame does not speak. Madame apparently had not even spoken to Henry on the two occasions when he had been permitted to come and stand beside her bed. She had looked at him and tried to smile, but had said nothing.

Marjorie perceived that in this conjuncture the keenest feeling she possessed was one of pity and terror for Lily. She felt hardly anything about Ricardo. He had achieved the death he had courted for many, many years. It was now difficult for her to recapture the memory, even the memory, of how he had turned her blood to water long ago in Spain. That was over and done. There was now a stricken woman deeply implicated in unfathomable ways which neither she nor anybody else could understand. The woman suffered; the man's sufferings had ended. For Marjorie it was not in the tunnel, but in the fashionable, vulgar hotel, with the gilded mirrors and endless imitation carpets, that the torture worked out its way.

A man from the police—not the ordinary police: no doubt the *Deuxième Bureau*—came and asked her questions about Ricardo. She was able to answer them in

perfect equanimity, because in fact she knew hardly anything. Yes, she had met Don Ricardo years ago in Spain, and had seen him recently in Cannes. Once he had come to her house for lunch. That was all. She knew nothing else.

The man hardly seemed to believe her, and his cold grey eyes were fixed upon her from beginning to end in a way she found dimly, but indifferently, offensive. It crossed her mind that she might say to him, with perfect truth, words such as these: 'The man you are asking about has sought death indefatigably for many years in pursuit of his heart's desire. He has found the first and not the second. It does not matter. But there is a woman pierced to the centre and that does matter. In all your politicking, my poor idiotic friend, have you ever stopped to think? No, of course not.'

She said nothing of the kind.

She said nothing of any kind. Her thoughts were, more than ever, her own, because if she had endeavoured to impart them to anybody she would have been lost in a cobweb of suppositions, fears and subtleties beyond the capacity of even a skilled tongue to express. Most of all, fear was hard to state when it had no source or object or reason, when it had only the heart's reason and, perhaps, a general feeling of compassion for women—for one, for all.

CHAPTER TWENTY

HENRY SAT hour after hour in the artificial hotel sitting room, artificial because it had no trace of habitability, and waited. He sometimes saw one of the two nurses, both nuns with an unvarying sweetness of demeanour, and two or three times a day he saw Dr. Croisset. After the second day he was allowed to go in and look at Lily, who smiled at him, or tried to do so, but did not speak. She was extremely pale but quiet and, as he could tell by looking into her eyes, perfectly rational. On the third day he was permitted the same privilege. It was on the fourth day, when she looked a little stronger, that she actually did speak.

'Henry,' she asked in a rather subdued voice, but not at all feeble, 'how do you happen to be here?'

'Marjorie Wogan telephoned to me to come here,' he said.

'Oh, I see. That was—on that day?'

'Yes.'

'It was kind of you, Henry. You are a great deal kinder than I deserve. Will you go away now?'

'Where? Back to Paris?'

'Perhaps. But away from here. I have to think.'

'Lily, I've only come to be of any use I can be. I want to . . .'

'I know, Henry. But I must think. It may take me quite a while. I have a great deal to think about.'

'I will wait until you have thought it all out, Lily. Then you can tell me—you can tell me anything you wish to say.'

▶ 'I am getting stronger now. I may be able to get out of bed to-day for a while. I may be able to take a walk outside to-morrow. So the nurse says.'

'I am glad.'

'But, please, Henry, leave me for a while. I just want to be able to think without talking. Perhaps in a day or so it may be different. The nuns don't matter, or the doctor, but with you I think I must talk intelligently, and I must think first.'

'All right, Lily dear. I'll stay away until you send for me. But I am here in the hotel. Françoise will call me whenever you like.'

'Thank you, Henry. You are good.'

He went away and waited after that in his own room rather than in her sitting room. It made little difference, because it was still a state of suspended animation. He was not really able to read or deal with his correspondence, which had begun to come in from Paris. He spent most of his time thinking of Lily. He remembered how she had been, the little flower of luxury, when he first met her in Paris and fell in love with her and persuaded her to marry him out of hand. He had not known much except her beauty and wit and isolation from the workaday world. He had learned from her own lips that she came from the workaday world and essentially belonged to it still and always. How could he have been expected to believe all that she said? He had seen and felt only the witchery of the orchid, the rare orchid. And then there was all that stupid and, he saw now, futile effort, the effort to domesticate her with the horses and dogs and begonias and children and cousins and relations and friends in his own life on Long Island. All of it had bored

her, although in the abstract (and she had been frank enough to say so) it had originally seemed desirable. None of this was for her or ever had been for her. She was from Albuquerque to Cannes, by way of Carthage and Heliopolis perhaps, but not by way of Long Island. She had laughed outrageously (he remembered it now with some pain) when she found that the only book beside the telephones in his house was *The Social Register*, a statistical enumeration of the mercantile aristocracy to which Henry belonged. 'How am I going to call the butcher for a beefsteak, if I ever want to call the butcher for a beefsteak?' He remembered how she had said it and how he had suffered. 'The cook will call the butcher for you, Lily,' he had said. And she had laughed. How she had laughed!

Well, she had laughed a great deal, and sometimes with the utmost cruelty, at things he had either taken for granted all his life or had learned to value. She did not like the horses or the dogs, although she liked them better than the relatives and friends. Above all she had been unconscionably rude to the great pillars of the society in which Henry was born. When she met a deaf, boring old woman covered in diamonds, in whose honour everybody else in the room stood up, she made it perfectly clear to all present (including the subject) that to her this was simply a deaf, boring old woman covered in diamonds. It was insufferable in Henry's world, and was so proclaimed in the numerous ways, some of them extremely indirect, in which such things are made known. Lily was an outcast in Henry's native habitat. It happened rapidly, so that by the end of the first year it was thoroughly understood on all sides. How she continued for eight full years before she took leave of that environment was more than he could now understand. She had been fond of him, he supposed—in fact, he knew—but

to this rare and independent spirit, as he considered her, bondage to a helotry in which she had no real obligation must have been galling beyond the power of affection or even love to heal. He thought now how incredibly stupid he had been throughout, thinking that she would 'get used to it' and they would 'get used to her', and everything would settle down into a routine like the schedules of the Long Island Railroad. He had clumsily, clumsily tried, and every clumsy attempt was worse than the previous clumsy attempt, so that he receded from her, that is, from the orchid, into the begonias and horses and dogs and relatives and friends, and no longer seemed to her to be her ally in the confrontation of powers.

Then was when she had taken her leave—when she thought he was more with them than with her.

He could not now imagine how he had ever permitted this to happen. Rather sell house and dogs and horses and gardens, rather live in hotel rooms for ever, rather tour like the Wandering Jew from desert to mountain to plain, than to lose the last touch he would ever have with the living beauty of an authentic human being! He had not truly known what she was until after her departure. Then he had seen how little it really meant to him, the habitual life, without the magic of her presence. How could he have asked the impossible, when the possible had been, all along, beyond the dream of happiness?

And moreover, as he thought harshly, harshly to himself, that is, she had been from beginning to end richer than he. He was rich. She was richer. There never had been one moment when she could not have bought them all out, relatives and friends and horses and dogs, and thrown them into the Atlantic, if she had so desired. This independence he had vainly and rashly thought to overcome by means of what was known in Henry's

family as 'position'. It was axiomatic in the Soames world that the possession of this mystical 'position', undefined and undefinable, made up for almost every lack a human creature might feel. Henry had heard about it so much throughout his entire life that he had taken it as proved, and had never really thought it out. Most of all, he had never essentially believed Lily when she told him (as she did as soon as she had surveyed the terrain) that 'position' meant nothing whatsoever to her as a basis for life. It was only after her departure that he understood how truly she had spoken, how infinitely silly 'position' seemed to her in comparison to, for example, poetry or freedom or music or love. Endless complications and misunderstandings had arisen because 'position' sometimes, or often, interfered with what she considered more desirable. The Soames family had had a box at the Metropolitan Opera House since its foundation. Lily was happy to use the box, but never could understand why it was necessary to arrive late in the company of assorted strangers who did not interest her and who steadfastly refused to listen to one note of the music. He could not convince her that one of the obligations of 'position' was the use of that opera box for the appeasement of the relatives and friends. She thought the purpose was to listen to the opera, and nothing could make her think otherwise. It was the same at the symphony orchestra, and would have been the same at the races and horse shows except that there it was she who could pay no attention to the spectacle and eventually ceased to go at all. Her 'rudeness'—that was what it was called by the relatives and friends, when they did not use worse words—was based upon a blank incomprehension of *why* Henry thought so many of these ritualistic observances necessary.

'The principal advantage of being rich,' she had said to

him with her usual cool directness on one occasion, 'is that it sets you free to do as you like. Within limits, of course. But largely. I can't see that you or any of your people enjoy that advantage. What's the sense?'

He thought back now, with a sharp, many-bladed bitterness, on the discussions or disagreements of this category which had made her finally decide that she could no longer live his life. He had been a sorry fool because he had never truly understood or even, essentially, believed what she said. He had thought her jealous (of Cousin Kate or Aunt Sarah) when in fact she was only bored. He had never taken it in that the pedigrees of these creatures meant nothing to her—that it was only the creatures themselves who made the impression good or bad. His mind had been formed so long before, so insensibly but irrevocably, that he was incapable of knowing the response of nature when he saw it. Pompous, conventional, narrow-minded idiot—thus he saw himself now, so much later, so much too late.

At the end of the week she sent for him.

When he came into her sitting room it was difficult at first to see that any impairment of her physical well-being had taken place. She was beautifully dressed, exquisitely calm, and there was no hint of the sick-room anywhere. The nuns had departed two days before, and she had actually been out, as he learned with some chagrin, on each of the preceding three days.

'Lily,' he protested, 'why didn't you let me take you out for a drive or a walk?'

'Henry, dear,' she said gently, 'we are no longer married, and I did not ask you to come here. Does that sound unkind? It isn't so intended. I only mean to tell the truth, to get things straight.'

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I shouldn't have asked. I'm only here to be of use if I can.'

'You are so good. But I have been through a modicum of hellfire and it is rather difficult for me to talk to anybody. I had to try to think.'

'I see that.'

'I had to be alone, Henry. The doctor and the nurses don't count. Neither does that poor automaton of a maid, who is now dying to escape from me and get back to Paris. Apparently I had a very severe case of shock for three or four days. My recovery is, according to the doctor, quite astonishing.'

'You've got such great strength, Lily. They'll never get you down for long.'

'How long is long?' she asked, with her mouth suddenly, slightly but perceptibly, twisted askew. 'Is it a day or a month or a year? Or is it forever?'

He began to notice little things—the shadows under her eyes, the quick little meaningless movements of her fingers in her lap.

'I don't understand anything about all this, Lily,' he said humbly. 'I am not anxious to talk about it. I am sure whatever I say will be wrong. But I am here and you can do what you like with me.'

'Your goodness and kindness are beyond anything I have deserved. But honestly, Henry, I do think you should go away. Your business affairs must be suffering. I am well now. I do not want you to stay here and wait for no reason, for nothing at all.'

'Is it for nothing?'

She looked away from him toward the gauze curtains and the pale December sunlight.

'I am sorry, Henry,' she said gently. 'I really am. I can't help it.'

There was a long pause because he did not trust himself to speak and she did not seem to have anything further to say.

'I will go, then,' he said finally. 'Do you want me to go now, at this minute?'

She put her handkerchief to her eyes briefly but thrust her hand out at him when he made a movement towards her.

'No,' she said, straightening up. 'There are one or two things I want to set straight. In the first place, you must stop paying me alimony. I don't need it. Your children are in need of money. Don't speak, Henry. Let me say what I have to say. You came down here some months ago to tell me that, and it must be true. So take the money and give it to them, or give some of it to them, or do as you please. You know quite well that I have enough of my own.'

'That is generous, Lily. I don't know what to . . .'

'Oh, nonsense. It isn't generous. It was remarkably ungenerous of me to refuse when you asked me. Neither then nor now is it a question of the money itself, or of any need for it. I think I refused out of vanity. Perhaps I am becoming a little less vain.'

'Vanity—I should never have thought—I don't believe . . .'

'I know myself pretty well. Take the money, Henry. It's yours anyhow. I'm afraid I only took it as tribute, you know, like a Roman proconsul. It doesn't belong to me and I don't need it, so that's that.'

'I will do whatever you tell me to do,' he said, noticing again how her fingers twitched. His eyes never left her, and she sat as if veiled, gazing out to sea.

'I want to do something for Steve's first wife,' she went on. 'I don't know her and I'm not really obliged to do so, but I shall feel better if I make some kind of settlement on her. I don't even know where she lives or what her name is now—she might well have re-married, I suppose—but the lawyers can find out easily enough.'

'I'm sure they can,' he said, half-stifled. He knew the woman's address perfectly well, having paid her a regular income for a good many years past, but this he could not say to Lily.

'There's one more thing,' she resumed after a silence. 'I want to make a will, after I have arranged some of these financial—er—adjustments. I've been thinking about it, and it really does seem that I have nobody except lawyers and bankers to attend to things for me. Would you consent to be the executor of my will? It may seem a little odd, since we are divorced, but I have no living relatives who are known to me.'

'Lily,' he said over his almost uncontrollable emotion. 'I'll do anything you say. But it's hard for me to listen to you talking about wills.'

'Oh, I've always had one. I only want to make a new one, that's all. I thought of drafting it myself—that is, just my intentions—and getting somebody to put it into legal form for me. There are American lawyers somewhere along this coast—at least there are consulates. Nice, I think, has a consulate.'

'Can I do it for you, my dear?' he asked.

'Perhaps. Although it isn't difficult. I could do it myself. Still, if you are staying another day, Henry—and I don't want to interfere with your plans . . .'

'Of course I'll stay another day or as many as you want.'

She seemed absorbed in her thoughts, as if he were not there; and then, remembering him, smiled in gratitude.

'I want to go home,' she said. 'That is to America. But I must get all this business into writing before I start.'

'I will help you in any way you say. What can I do?'

'I'll write out the draft this afternoon,' she said slowly, as if in some distress of spirit—as if, for the first time, she

experienced a difficulty of formulation. 'I'll try to make it quite clear. Then perhaps to-morrow, if you are still here . . .'

'I'll be here.'

'You could take it to Nice for me and get it put into proper form. That is, if Nice is the right place for it.'

'I'll find that out.'

She sighed.

'I never used to get tired. I get tired now.'

'You've been ill,' he said, choking again on his own voice.

'I'm supposed to take a walk in the morning,' she said. Her voice had become childlike, probably because she was tired. 'Would you like to walk with me, Henry?'

'You know that I would.'

'Then come here at ten-thirty to-morrow morning and we'll walk along the Croisette and look at the little boats. I can give you what I have written and you can take it to Nice for me, if you will. Is that asking too much?'

'You know better than that.'

'Oh, I know, Henry, I know. There is hardly anything I could ask that you wouldn't do. But I don't want to abuse your goodness. Still, if you have wanted to help me all these days, this is one thing you could do.'

'I can. And I'm sure there are other things, too. And it will give me some—some kind of happiness—a poor kind, maybe—but something, if I can be of use to you. There must be other things. For going to America, as one instance. Do you want a ship or a plane, and how soon, and can't I find out all those things for you?'

'A ship, I thought,' she said. 'A ship from somewhere near here. I believe there are some which sail from Villefranche. Could you find that out, too? There might be a ship sailing in about a week, and I could get all my

paraphernalia packed and dumped aboard that ship, and have a long, quiet journey. I'll let poor Françoise go back to Paris when the packing is done. It would be very useful if you did find out for me, Henry.'

'You shall know all about it at half-past ten to-morrow morning,' he promised, attempting to rise to the cheerful tone of every day.

'I'll be waiting for you,' she said. 'I don't walk a lot but I'm really pretty well. It just takes a little time. When I get off that ship I'll be completely recovered.'

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AT HALF-PAST ten on the next morning he rang at her door and found her ready. She was dressed all in blue with a small blue hat which surrounded her face with a streak of sky-colour; it made her hazel eyes lighter and clearer, and although they were never precisely blue, they looked blue at times by reflection. He thought she seemed better than on the previous day and said so.

'Every day a little more,' she said almost gaily. 'I was really unsteady on my pins three or four days ago. Come along, I'm supposed to walk for a whole hour this morning if I don't feel too tired for it.'

He tried to assume the impersonality he did not feel.

'There's a ship from Villefranche six days from now,' he said. 'Moreover, it's a good one. Will that do?'

'That will do. In fact, it's perfect.'

'And there's a lawyer in Nice who can cook up the legal verbiage for you. I've talked to him on the telephone and told him I was coming. And I've engaged a car for that enterprise.'

'Good. You think of everything.'

'I made the reservation on the ship, just in case you wanted it. I can confirm that later.'

They went out into the clear morning and walked along the sea wall. She stopped there after a bit, opened her handbag and took out of it a folded sheet of paper.

'That's the document,' she said. 'It's fairly simple. You can read it later. It refers to whatever is left of my possessions after I've made the adjustments I have in mind. That is, I'm going to do something for Steve's first wife when I get home, and I may give away some of the money besides, but whatever's left is to be disposed of in the way I've written it down. I've also signed it, and Françoise witnessed it, so I suppose it's a valid testament just as it stands, but I'd prefer to see it decked out in words like whereas and hereinbefore.'

'Yes, they're a comfort,' he agreed with determination.

'What a lovely morning!' she said. 'When I first came to Cannes I hardly looked at the place itself. I looked at people. I've learned to reverse that.'

'Marjorie Wogan telephoned to me a while ago,' he said. 'She seemed pleased that we were going for a walk.'

Lily smiled to herself.

'I've mentioned Marjorie in that document,' she said finally. They had walked along for a bit without speaking. 'Some jewels. Some that she liked. I'd like her to have them.' And then, later: 'She is, practically speaking, a friend. I think she's demonstrated that. Curious how few I've had, among women, that is. Perhaps none. She wanted me to go to Africa with her.'

'It might have been a good idea,' he said. 'But if you want to go home, that's better. Where exactly are you thinking of going?'

'Oh, out there, you know, where I came from.'

'Albuquerque?'

'Not precisely, although I may go there to begin with—must, I suppose. No, I have a place in mind. Up in the mountains.'

'What sort of place?'

They swung along for a minute or two before she

replied. Then she put her hand on his sleeve and said: 'Let's rest a bit. Here by the wall.'

'Want a lift up?'

'Yes. Oh, good. . . !'

She perched on the sea wall and he leaned against it beside her. He lighted cigarettes for both of them.

'The place I have been thinking of,' she said slowly, looking at him for almost the first time in these two days with any degree of concentrated attention, 'is a convent.'

'What?'

'That's what I said,' she told him, smiling a little. 'It's funny, isn't it?'

'I'm afraid I don't follow. A Catholic convent? You're not even a Catholic.'

'Of course not,' she agreed. 'I don't even know any too well what that means. But it's a place I saw once or twice when I was a little girl. It's old—Spanish, of course—and has great thick walls and cool shadows. The mountains look quite beautiful through that kind of heavy, cool archway. They are deeply coloured in the morning and in the evening—blue, mostly, but with shades of lilac and violet and purple. They aren't very near.'

'What gave you this idea?'

'I don't know. Perhaps it was my nurses this week. They were nuns, you know. They reminded me of the place I want to go to.'

'It's not very much in your line, Lily. What will you do there? You aren't contemplating the religious life, are you?'

'Hardly. I'm not sure I know what religion is. I just want to find a place where I can be quiet. They have a lot of people there who aren't nuns, you know, visitors and people who work there too.'

'I shouldn't think you'd last long at it.'

'Maybe not. It's just an idea. But that's where I want to go. I could try doing some work.'

'What kind of work? This does sound strange to me, I must say.'

'Oh, I could wash dishes. I started out washing dishes. I might as well see if I still know how.'

He kept quiet for a while because he was afraid to say what he really thought. She had been ill; she had been through some experience unimaginable to him; whatever he might say would probably offend. And yet he could not let this pass without a word.

'I do not understand you, Lily,' he said at last. 'This is like nothing else I ever knew. I know you have been ill. You seem well this morning. What is the matter?'

She threw her cigarette over the sea wall.

'I don't think I can ever tell anybody really,' she said. 'I don't understand it myself. I did something. I didn't really mean to do it—that is, I had no idea of the consequences. But I did it. Men have died because of it.'

He did not dare to speak.

'It is true, Henry. It is simply true.'

'I'm sorry,' he said, looking at his own shoes.

'I must be quiet for a long time and try to understand,' she said. 'It may not work. I don't know. But I can't live in this world, this world here, any longer.'

'Are you sure,' he ventured, 'that it's not just an effect of your illness?'

'No, not at all. I'm sure, on the contrary, that it is an effect of my illness, or that this and the illness came from the same cause. But anyhow I do know what I am going to do. I'm pretty clear-headed.'

'Yes, that you certainly are,' he conceded. 'My trouble is that I cannot imagine you of all people in the situation

you describe, the place you are going to, the work you want. I am stupid, or rather I suppose I haven't any imagination.'

She produced something approaching an audible laugh.

'You do look so woebegone, Henry!' she said. 'I know it's downright funny. I see all that. But here we go! Anyhow, do let's talk about something cheerful. See the pretty little boat out there, right on the edge of the water! Let's walk a little more. I'm not tired yet.'

They walked.

Presently she said: 'You'll see in that document that what possessions I have left—that is, after a certain time and some adjustments and some diminutions—will be divided between two people. They are you and a certain old Spanish duchess.'

'Oh, stop talking like that!' he burst out. 'I'm considerably older than you, and whoever the old Spanish duchess may be, she's undoubtedly old enough to be your grandmother. What's got into you? You're never gloomy, you've never been like this.'

She took his arm.

'Dear Henry,' she said, 'it's just for now. Just for to-day. I want you to humour my whims once more. You've done it often enough.'

'O.K.,' he said. 'I'm your Spartan slave. But a fellow does get puzzled sometimes.'

'Where's your car for Nice?' she asked. They were near the hotel.

'Around the corner in the garage,' he said. 'I'll pick it up when I want it.'

'Then you'd better do it now,' she said. 'I'm going in to lie down a bit and have some lunch. When you get back from Nice call me and we might have a really cheerful conversation.'

The garage was around the corner, in the side street

arising sharply from the Croisette, but on the opposite side.

'Don't come in with me,' she said. 'Run along, Henry, and thank you—I do thank you.'

She crossed to the hotel and he turned the other way. Thus he was in the worst position to see what happened—he was beginning to cross on the other side of the street. A rickety green taxicab came at an insane but not unusual speed around the corner. It was impossible to see how or what or why, but there was a horrid shock of noise, an outbreak of screams, and the taxicab careened madly on down the Croisette. Henry, frozen in his place for one moment, was aware only that Lily lay there by the kerb. He ran blindly through the traffic, dodging cars by instinct rather than by perception. There was a tempest in his mind, a whirlwind of conflicting uncertainties: was *this* what she had meant? Was *this* what she intended? Did she do this or was this done to her? Was it the blind accident of fate? Design or intention, or intention contained within design? His mind was stormed with opposing horrors. Before he got to her there were already a considerable number of people there, from the terrace of the hotel, from the street, from one or two passing cars which halted with a piercing shriek of brakes. There was an instantaneous chaos. Henry knew nothing of it. He reached Lily and knelt beside her. She was at the very kerb, where she had been thrown by the blow. There was blood at her mouth and on her forehead. He could see only her face; a partial blindness overcame him.

'Lily!' he shouted at the top of his voice. 'Lily!'

Her eyes focused on his. It seemed to him that she tried to speak but could not. Her eyes implored him for something.

'Lily!' he yelled. An idea came from nowhere, out of the swirling madness. 'What is it? Is it Steve's first wife?

I'll do it, Lily!' He shouted even louder, all his being in one suppliant force to pierce the barrier. 'I'll do it all, Lily, I'll do all of it!'

He might have told her that Steve's first wife was all right, that he had already seen to it. Now it was too late to tell her that or anything else.